

**Charles University**  
**Faculty of Arts**  
**Department of the Middle Eastern Studies**  
**Asian and African History and Culture**

# **Dissertation**

Mgr. et Mgr. Jakub Koláček

Islám a ekologická krize: Moderní islámské diskurzy o životním prostředí

## **Islam and Ecological Crisis: Modern Islamic Environmental Discourses**

Dissertation supervisor **Mgr. Pavel Ťupek Ph.D.**

**2024**

## Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank my supervisor, Pavel Ťupek, for our friendly and professional collaboration during my Ph.D study as well as for all his suggestions and comments, especially those made during the writing process. In addition, many other colleagues helped me by providing suggestions, reading parts of the text, giving me challenging questions, or otherwise facilitating my research. Specifically, I would like to thank Olga Lomová for giving me early insights into some important aspects of the problem, Tereza Jermanová for her comments on methodology, Zuzana Kříhová for giving me her constant support in my effort to include in the work the Persianate world without which it would be impoverished, and František Ondráš for spending his time to consult with me the questions concerning the Arabic literature. However, the credit also goes to other members of the staff and students of the Department of the Middle East, Charles University, creating a professional and supportive environment for academic work. In addition, I would like to thank the students of the Seminary on the Environmental Problems of the Middle East in the discussion with whom some of the important ideas in this work emerged and who informed me about some important facts by elaborating their presentations for the course (I will credit them by name at due place even if I cannot yet quote them). I would also like to thank the people from Egypt, Iran, Turkey, Iraq, and Jordan who supported me with their hospitality and generosity during my travels and scholarships and without whom many parts of this work, even its whole, could not be written. Still, more specifically, I would like to thank the faculty of Shahid Chamran University in Ahvaz, American University in Cairo, the Faculty of Arts of Cairo University, and the Ministry of Environment of the Egyptian Arab Republic for giving me access to valuable materials and discussing with me some important aspects of the problems of environment in the Middle East. Finally, my thanks go to my family, who supported me throughout my whole study both emotionally and materially, especially my beloved Karina, who sometimes took more than just a share of caring for our two daughters to enable me to finish my chapters—something for which she deserves my gratitude and future redress.

I hereby declare that I have written this dissertation independently, using only the mentioned and duly cited sources and literature, and that the work has not been used in another university study program or to obtain the same or another academic title.

In Prague on June 2, 2024

Jakub Kolář, v. r.

## **Abstrakt**

Předkládaná dizertace se zabývá vnímáním otázek životního prostředí v islámu od 60. let 20. století do současnosti. Jejím cílem je představit tento fenomén dosud nejucelenějším způsobem. Zaměřuje se na čtyři oblasti: diskusi o ekologické krizi, která v islámu začala od 60. let 20. stol. pod vlivem tzv. nového environmentalismu, činnost náboženských a sekulárních institucí, které využívají islámské pojmy k propagaci environmentálních politik a ochránářských agend, vybrané případy vzniku islámských environmentálních hnutí a lokálních diskurzů a rozvojem akademického studia islámské ekoteologie a environmentální etiky. Sleduje tak historický vývoj toho, co je v práci chápáno jako islámský environmentální diskurz. Jak ukazuje, tento diskurz čerpá ze sdílené množiny motivů a konceptů odvozených z islámské textové tradice a z představy, že islám může morálním obsahem svého učení sehrát pozitivní roli při řešení ekologické krize. Tyto motivy jsou ale využívány k různým účelům a k prosazování různých agend v rámci různých společenských kontextů. Na základě příkladů liberálního a eklektického aktivismu mezi muslimskými diasporami v západních zemích, konzervativních a na identitu důraz kladoucích zpracování environmentálních témat tradicionalistickými duchovními na Blízkém východě, úspěšného eko-islámského hnutí v Indonésii, experimentování s environmentálními tématy ze strany islamistů, instrumentálního přístupu institucí a širšího rámce akademické debaty o náboženství a ekologii vytváří mapu heterogenního a globalizovaného diskurzivního pole se spleťou historií a příspěvky různorodých a někdy neočekávaných charakterů. Práce teoreticky interpretuje tuto diverzitu skrze konceptualizaci islámské tradice jako asambláže utvářené plejádou materiálních i nemateriálních prvků, která je však propojena sdíleným kódem písemné tradice, jež je přizpůsobována aby mohla odpovídat na nové problémy a dilemata. Mezi ta patří i zásadní fakt, že lidstvo stojí před existenciální environmentální krizí.

## **Klíčová slova**

Islám, Korán, environmentální etika, diskurz, environmentální historie, teorie asambláže, historická sociologie, ekologická krize

## **Abstract**

This dissertation maps the reception of environmental themes in Islam from the 1960s until the present. In an attempt to bring the hitherto most comprehensive account of this phenomenon from a critical perspective, it focuses on four main areas: the debate about environmental crisis in Islam emerging under the influence of the so-called new environmentalism from the 1960s on, the activity of Islamic and secular institutions drawing on Islamic concepts to promote environmental policies and conservationist agendas, selected cases of emergence of Islamic environmentalist movements and other local receptions of the discourse, and the emergence of academic field focused on Islamic ecotheology and environmental ethics. By that, it follows the historical development of what is conceptualized in the work as the Islamic environmental discourse. It shows that this discourse draws a shared pool of Islamic concepts and scriptural motives and the imaginary of Islam as a positive moral force capable of contending with the ecological crisis but that these motives are mobilized to different ends and to promote various agendas in varying social contexts. Drawing on the cases of the eclectic and liberal environmental activism among Muslim diasporas in the West, the conservative and identitarian thematization of the environment by conservative scholars in the Middle East, the apparent success of eco-Islamic movement in Indonesia, the experiments with environmental discourse by Islamists, the instrumental approach of institutions, and the broader framework of the academic debate on religion and ecology, the work draws the map of a heterogeneous and globally dispersed discursive field that possesses an intricate history reflecting causal links and agency of multiple and sometimes unexpected actors. In theorizing this diversity, the work draws on conceptualizing the Islamic tradition as an assemblage constituted by a plethora of heterogeneous ideational and material components but tied together by a shared code of scriptural sources adapted to respond to new problems and dilemmas, among which is also the fundamental fact of the existential environmental crisis faced by humanity.

## **Keywords**

Islam, Qur'an, environmental ethics, discourse, environmental history, assemblage theory, historical sociology, ecological crisis

# Contents

<b>List of Tables</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Note on Transliteration</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>1 Methodology and Theory: Applying Historical and Sociological Perspective on a Religious Discourse</b> .....	<b>19</b>
1.1 The Delineation of the Research Problem and Research Questions: Islam and the Environment in Current Debates and Beyond.....	20
1.1.1 The State of the Art: Islam and the Environment in Literature.....	20
1.1.2 Questions Asked and Questions Unanswered: The Aims of the Work.....	44
1.2 Methodology and Theory.....	55
1.2.1 Ontology: Conceiving of the World in General and Islam and the Environment in Particular.....	55
1.2.2 Epistemology and Theory: Studying Islam and the Environment.....	75
<b>2 Postmodern Assemblage or Eternal Values? An Overview of the Islamic Discourse on the Environment</b> .....	<b>90</b>
2.1 Mapping the Plurality: Basic Definitions, Facts, and the Historical and Spatial Overview.....	92
2.1.1 Defining the Field: The Structure of the Discourse.....	92
2.1.2 Mapping the Field: The Scope and Structure of the Discourse.....	97
2.2 Homogeneity of the Discourse: The „Catechism“ of the Islamic Environmentalism.....	108
2.2.1 The Concept of the Virtual Catechism.....	109
2.2.2 The Structure of the Catechism and its Themes.....	113
<b>3 Articulating Moral Posture: The Early Discussions and Primary Motives of the Islamic Environmental Discourse</b> .....	<b>143</b>
3.1 Necessary Context: Modernity, the Environment, and Environmentalism. .	146
3.1.1 The Environment and the Environmental Change: Modern Environmental Transformations.....	146
3.1.2 Environmentalism.....	159
3.2 The Early Responses: S. H. Nasr, Z. Sardar, and P. Manzoor and Conceiving of the “Islamic Position”.....	184
3.2.1 S. H. Nasr, the Critique of Secularity and the Elaboration of the First Islamic Environmental Tenuets.....	185
3.2.2 Continuation of the Debate on Islam, Modernity, and Ecological Crisis some 15 years later: Ziauddin Sardar’s Cycle.....	204

3.3 The Quest for Morality: The Basic Motive of the Discourse.....	214
3.3.1 The Logic of the Religious Response.....	215
3.3.2 The Components of the Moral Response.....	223
3.3.3 Conclusion: The Morality as a Sociological Explanation and Some of the Consequences.....	229
<b>4 Promoting Social Change: The Role of Institutions.....</b>	<b>237</b>
4.1 Environmentalism, Institutions, and Islam: The Lineage of the Connection .....	241
4.1.1 The Institutionalization of the Environmental Agenda from the 1960s. .	241
4.1.2 The Institutions Involved in the Promotion of the Islamic Discourse on the Environment and the Logic of Their Involvement.....	244
4.2 The Institutional Histories of the Islamic Discourse on the Environment... .	251
4.2.1 The Early Stage: The Islamic Principles and the Assisi Declaration.....	251
4.2.2 Other Interventions from the West: The Establishment of the ARC and its Continued Activism.....	265
4.2.3 The Institutional Engagement Originating in Muslim Countries.....	278
4.3 Between High Aims and Limited Results: The Influence of the Institutional Engagement.....	289
4.3.1 The Significance of the Institutional Resources.....	289
4.3.2 Different Motivations and Shift in the Discourse.....	291
4.3.3 The Diversity of the Assemblage and the Hybridity of the „Religious“ and „Secular“.....	295
4.3.4 A Question Scarcely Asked: The Impact.....	296
<b>5 Echoing Cultures and Identities: Activists and Other Actors Adapting the Discourse.....</b>	<b>300</b>
5.1 The Strands of Islamic Environmentalism.....	303
5.1.1 The „Islamic Environmentalist“ Identity: Environmental Activism Among Muslim Communities in the West.....	304
5.1.2 The „Islamic Scholar“ Identity in the Context of the Middle East.....	328
5.1.3 The Discourse of Outlaws: Islamists and Extremists on Islam and The Environment.....	351
5.1.4 Close and Distant Lands: Indonesia and Other Global Spaces of Proliferation of Muslim Environmental Identities.....	363
5.2 What Defies the Catechism: The Heterogeneity of the Discourse.....	385
5.2.1 Different Natures and Solutions: The Variance in Framing of the Ecological Themes.....	386
5.2.2 Different Roles of Religion: Between „Ethical“ Inspiration and Legal Obligation.....	395
5.2.3 Different Views of Identity: Between „Us“ and „Them“.....	400
<b>6 Taking Scholarly Perspective: The Academic Discourse on Environmental</b>	

<b>Ethics, Ecotheology and Beyond.....</b>	<b>409</b>
6.1 Mapping the History of Academic Interventions.....	411
6.1.1 Returning to the Age of Early New Environmentalism: The Religion and Ecology Debate.....	411
6.1.2 The Emancipation of the “Islam and the Environment” Field and its Further Development.....	419
6.2 The Academic Discourse on Islam and the Environment in a Critical Perspective: The Limitations and Possible Ways Forward.....	433
6.2.1 The Two „Primordialist Sins” .....	434
6.2.2 Novel and Critical Approaches.....	443
6.2.3 How to Proceed? The Case for Islamic Environmental History.....	468
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>478</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>490</b>



## **List of Tables**

Indicators of global environmental change in the 20th century .....	158
---	-----

## List of Abbreviations

AKDN	Aga Khan Development Network
AKTC	Aga Khan Trust for Culture
BAKWATA	National Muslim Council of Tanzania
CCM	Cambridge Central Mosque
CFC	chlorofluorocarbons
COP	Conference of Parties
CSWR	Center for the Study of World Religions
DDT	dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane
DRA	Directorate of Religious Affairs, Turkey
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council, United Nations
EIASC	Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council
EMDC	Earth-Mates Dialogue Centre
ENGO	environmental non-governmental organization
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization, United Nations
FCNA	Fiqh Council of North America
FOEI	Friends of the Earth International
GKM	Green Knight Multimedia
ICOREC	International Consultancy of Religion, Education and Culture
IEA	Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan
IFEES	Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
INDC	Intended Nationally Determined Contributions
IRW	Islamic Relief Worldwide
ISCC	Iterfaith Summit on Climate Change
ISESCO	Islamic Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization
ISSRNC	International Society fro the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KUNA	Kuwait News Agency
MACCA	Muslim Associations for Climate Change Action
MENA	Middle East and North Africa

MEPA	Meteorological and Environmental Protection Administration, Saudi Arabia
MIMCA	Misali Island Marine Conservation Area
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
MML	Magyarországi muszlimok lapja [Hungarian Muslims Newspaper]
MSCU	Muslim Supreme Council of Uganda
MUI	Majelis Ulama Indonesia
MWAU	Muslim Women Association of Uganda
MWL	Muslim World League
MYAU	Muslim Youth Assembly of Uganda
NCR	Network on Conservation and Religion
NGO	non-governmental organization
NU	Nahdatul Ulama
OIC	Organization of Islamic Conference/Cooperation
PKB	Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa [National Awakening Party, Indonesia]
PWR	Parliament of World Religions
RABI	Royal Al al-Bayt Institute
SHI	Sarekat Hijau Indonesia [Indonesia Green Union]
UN	United Nations
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNCHE	United Nations Conference on Human Environment
UV	ultraviolet
WALHI	Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia [Indonesian Forum for the Environment]
WFEIP	The First World Forum on the Environment from an Islamic Perspective
YFRE	Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology

## **Note on Transliteration**

In transliteration from Arabic and Persian, I adhere to the rules of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES). A simplified form of transliteration is used for common terms (e.g., shari‘a or mufti), titles, and proper names. Names of prominent and well-known personalities and organizations (e.g., Osama bin Laden, Ali Khamenei, Hizbullah) as well as of authors who publish under romanized versions of their names are spelled according to their common use.

# Introduction

Especially throughout the last several years, the talk about environmental problems and dangers has become ever more present throughout all parts of the world. From the pollution of our immediate environments by waste, chemical substances, and noxious gasses to the global pollution of oceans by plastics, the loss of biodiversity, and the specter of catastrophic anthropogenic climate change, these dangers seem to steadily escalate without apparent solution or will to ameliorate them. This makes it rather surprising that the broader popular knowledge of these systemic problems is relatively young. Even though the conscience about *some* environmental problems and their various aspects has been here for centuries, if not millennia, it was only some 60 years ago and at the time when the human incursion into nature already reached considerable proportions, when the terms *environment* and *ecology* became commonly used to signify the human ability to alter life-sustaining natural processes and potentially upend them to the point that they endanger the stability of the human civilization itself. Ever since that time, our understanding of the entanglement of the sphere of the human and social within the natural and environmental and the ubiquity of ecological relations that underpin it progressively broadened. This happened not only due to the accumulation of scientific observations and the development of new models and theories that explain natural processes but, increasingly, also through the contribution of humanistic disciplines and perspectives like economy, sociology, history, and philosophy. The notions of the environment and ecology have, in this sense, undisputably transformed the sphere of human knowledge and now comprise a universal paradigm through which we approach the world as scientists and scholars in most areas (cf. Kuhn 1996; 2008, xvii), but exerted their influence also far beyond that. Ultimately, the realities brought into conscience by the environmental perspective touch upon things that concern all—the state of the

ecosystems and still more expansive earth systems on our planet, our economies, well-being, human dignity, and, crucially, the “things to come” in all of these areas. Especially if we give credence to assessments that our current way of life is in fundamental conflict with our well-being as individuals and societies in the future, the questions that environmentalists and environmental scientists have elaborated on are not only scientific but also civic, moral and political.

In this work, I focus on the intersection of this environmental worldview with Islam as one of the religious traditions of our contemporary world. Muslims, like any other community adhering to a particular faith, creed, or belief (whether religious, political, or other), have been affected by environmental problems and, in many cases, by the moral and intellectual dilemmas implied by their existence and cognition. And at least for some of them, these dilemmas and considerations eventually became a matter of religious importance, eliciting various responses. These responses, in significant part, took the form of texts and statements, with their common denominator being the effort to establish the meaning and significance of ecology and environmental problems from the religious perspective. These texts and statements are also the main subject of study in this dissertation as elements of what will be henceforth referred to as *Islamic environmental discourse*.

What has been the Islamic response to ecology transmitted by this discourse? At least in one substantial aspect, this has been remarkably homogeneous. According to a widespread consensus, Islam is not indifferent to nature and the environment but addresses them in its scriptures, embracing norms and morals applicable to ecological relations between man and the rest of creation. These, as it is widely held, are unequivocally “ecological” and command the protection and preservation of the natural environment. For those who embrace such a view, good Muslims should, therefore, act responsibly as “stewards,” strive to uphold environmental balance around them and avoid harming and “corrupting” the environment. Significantly, this is not only because it may seem rational and moral in more general terms, but because, as many sustain, “stewardship” (*khilāfa*), upholding the balance (*mīzān*) and avoiding “corruption” (*fasād*) has been prescribed by God in the Qur’an. As a widespread opinion goes,

Islam can and should play, for these reasons, a major positive role in contending with the global ecological crises.

It is, in fact, difficult to establish how many pious Muslims worldwide are cognizant of such tenets and attach importance to them. But it is certain that the elementary knowledge of them is widespread. The theme has become a part of the repertoire of issues discussed in the scholastic literature and religious manuals in different languages. It has spread via the internet and social media and has been echoed or outright promoted by some publicly well-known personalities. In a few places, it has produced small but vocal activist subcultures attempting to put the environmental commandments of Islam into practice. And not least, it has affected public perceptions of Islam by non-Muslims due to the attention occasionally raised in the global media. As such, „Islamic environmentalism,“ in its many different modalities, has become a part of the religious culture and landscape of contemporary Islam, which, moreover, relates to a theme and problem that is universally important.

The structure and composition of this study have been motivated by the fact that although the Islamic environmental discourse (at least in its current form) has now circulated for more than 50 years, it has received comparatively little scholarly interest and treatment (which may be perhaps in part ascribed to the fact that it has not created divisions and strife, generated mass political movements, or become a pretext for major controversies—even if neither makes it less a component of contemporary Islamic religiosity). This is not necessarily because there would be a lack of scholarly literature on “Islam and the environment.” Nevertheless, as will be discussed in more detail shortly, the majority of this literature subscribes to a specific methodology. As such, it is ultimately not *about* the Islamic environmental discourse or “Islamic environmentalism” but rather about the “environmental values” *within* Islam, sometimes to the point that it is not easily discernible from the statements that are produced as a part of the discourse itself. These studies, applying what will be later defined as the *primordialist perspective*, have been supplemented by a limited amount of critical scholarship studying the actual Muslim environmental movements and discourses. Still, these have often focused on restricted geographical and cultural areas or narrow segments of the broader discourse, which is, in fact, much more expansive

and seems to represent, to a certain degree, a universal phenomenon in contemporary Islam spread across its diverse local, doctrinal, and cultural varieties. There is thus an apparent lacuna in the form of a missing comprehensive account of “Islamic environmentalism.”

This dissertation attempts to, at least in part, fill this lacuna. Its aim is to track the emergence and evolution of “Islamic environmentalism,” map its multiple iterations and modalities across different social contexts, show how it has become a part of contemporary Islamic religiosity and culture and to what consequences, and come to terms with the ideas, concepts, and arguments that animate it. In what follows, it will be proposed that the Islamic environmental discourse emerged under the influence of the epistemic shift brought by modern environmentalism and out of the conviction that religion cannot remain indifferent to it. It will be shown that its development took a long time and considerable effort from a few dedicated Muslim enthusiasts who were sometimes provided help from non-Muslim environmentalists. And it will also be made evident that while seemingly homogeneous and derived from the same register of excerpts of the invariable scriptural tradition, “Islamic environmentalism” is, in reality, very much diverse and reflects the broader heterogeneity of Islamic creeds and cultures. To transmit this diversity, I will draw on a corresponding diversity of sources, including the books and essays authored by philosophers and activists living in the West and writing in English, documents issued by international institutions and governments of Muslim states, as well as texts by conservative scholars speaking to their audiences in the Arabic language. I will supplement these primary sources with many other secondary ones, transmitting the necessary historical and social contexts (spanning from the broader framework of environmentalism and environmental thinking to the concrete individual biographies and institutional histories) and also utilize the other extant studies about Islam and the environment. I will also ask several broader questions that will concern the relationship between heterogeneity and homogeneity within a religious tradition, its interaction with other realms of knowledge and discourses, and, ultimately, the possibility of thinking about religion in the context of the environment and ecological relations in general.



To this end, I will draw on the main methodological category of discourse (understood in its broad Foucauldian sense as a circulation of language and signs ordering human attitudes towards reality), which will also be, as already premised, used to conceptualize the studied phenomena in the first place. Still, to embrace its other relevant dimensions (that include the agency of individuals and organizations, the emergence of social networks and movements, as well as material flows and practices), I will employ a broader interdisciplinary methodology, combining the multiparadigmatic approach of historical sociology, the specialized field of environmental history, as well as the specific theory of *assemblages* derived originally from the philosophical work of G. Deleuze and F. Guattari and used primarily to understand the plurality within Islam as a religious tradition. This methodology will be introduced in more detail in the first chapter.

Ultimately, this work shall thus provide a comprehensive fractographic and theoretical framework for thinking about the phenomena of “Islamic environmentalism” as well as understanding and further inquiring about its specific localized occurrences. As it will be shortly evident, its subject is expansive, and therefore, it cannot be expected to provide all desirable answers. In fact, the picture of the Islamic reception of the themes of environmentalism and ecology that will be finally given will be one of plurality and ambivalence and will, in many aspects, defy definitive judgments. Yet, arguably, this shall not be viewed as completely surprising and unexpected. This is not only because this plurality and ambivalence may be much more characteristic of the religious phenomena than we often realize and admit but also because the Islamic environmental discourse is still very much a process of making.

It is, after all, the environmental worldview itself, which is still relatively young, and even if it has already brought significant and, in some aspects, revolutionary consequences for our understanding of the world around us, it is almost sure that we are posed to witness its further development in the foreseeable future, enhanced by the environmental transformations in the material realm. As far as the Islamic tradition remains a part of the global society coping with environmental problems and dilemmas, and as far as Islam is something more than just a private faith, it is probable that we will also witness the development and proliferation of “Islamic environmentalism.” What consequences and impact

will it have would be only possible to determine and assess when and after they occur. Hopefully, this work will then be helpful in making sense of at least some of their aspects.

# 1 Methodology and Theory: Applying Historical and Sociological Perspective on a Religious Discourse

The present work's main aspiration is to provide the reader with a comprehensive account of a phenomenon that by itself evades a simple definition: should it be called "Islamic environmentalism," as some call it? Or is it more appropriate to speak about "Islam and the environment"? Or, in contrast, focus on more narrow categories of "Islamic environmental ethics" or "ecothology"? Even if all of these terms may have a distinct meaning in their particular context and will be frequently met and referred to, I will propose that they all ultimately return to a common discourse, which will be conceptualized in this work as an "Islamic discourse on the environment." The main aim of this chapter will be to establish a basis for describing and theorizing this phenomenon and at least partly thus overcome its apparent indeterminacy. In the first part, I will review the extant scholarly literature on "Islam and the environment" and categorize it according to different approaches taken (1.1.1). This will subsequently serve as a basis for the first preliminary debate about the nature and character of the studied phenomena, from which the bulk of questions this work will attempt to answer as well as the basic strategy of doing so, will be derived (1.1.2). In the second part, I will proceed with an overview of methodological and theoretical means that will be employed. This will propose to study the Islamic environmental discourse as occurring within a social assemblage of Islam, which exists within particular material—and thus also environmental—conditions (1.2.1). Subsequently, I will introduce the perspectives of historical sociology and environmental history as the main vantage points taken throughout the rest of the work (1.2.2).

## **1.1 The Delineation of the Research Problem and Research Questions: Islam and the Environment in Current Debates and Beyond**

Since the theme of „Islam and the environment“ is not new, it is impossible to ignore what has been up to this day written about it, even though, as it will be shortly observed, the extant state of the research on the subject may eventually raise more questions than it answers. In what follows, I will first examine the existing contributions to the topic, which, aside from providing a first significant insight into the character and scope of the studied phenomena, will demonstrate that, no matter how we call it or define it, „Islam and the environment,“ has not received sufficient scholarly treatment from a critical, social-scientific and historical perspective. Consequently, the identified gap will serve as a basis for the formulation of research questions and aims of this work. This will comprise chronicling, analyzing, and theorizing what will be defined first and foremost as a *discourse* that circulates across various social contexts to which a plurality of causal relationships entangles it. This basic definition will be further developed in the following parts of this chapter and will serve as a primary vantage point throughout the whole work.

### **1.1.1 The State of the Art: Islam and the Environment in Literature**

Anyone making a bibliographic search of sources related to the question of “Islam and environment” will nowadays end up with no shortage of sources. Even though it is difficult to make such comparisons, their overall volume may approach what would be yielded by searching for analogical connections like “Islam and economy” or “Islam and gender.” This should, after all, not come as a surprise. The theme of environmental issues has been highly relevant, at least for the last thirty years. It relates by its very definition to an almost unlimited sphere

of human practices from which neither religion in general nor particular religious traditions can be meaningfully excluded.

Unfortunately, this apparent abundance of sources does not make it always easier for a potential inquirer to find clear answers about either the “Islamic view on the environment” (if we assume that there is such a view, which may be a natural expectation supported by many claims in this direction) or, more generally, the overall scope of the problem and its various facets. In fact, it is rather the opposite, which is true. In distinction to many other phenomena or *problematique*, where we usually find a well-defined theme about which a volume of relevant research gradually aggregates, eventually giving birth to a well-demarcated research field occupied by a group of devoted specialists possessing a set of authoritative answers (even if sometimes multiple and mutually disagreed), we find little of that in the area of “Islam and the environment.” What we see instead is a relatively wide array of publications that vary significantly in terms of quality, purpose, and methodological commitments, many speakers whose role and position in the field are hard to decipher, a cacophony of opinions that is hard to relate to each other, few (if any) universally acknowledged authorities, and very little *tradition* in the positive sense of the word (cf. Paden 1988).

Eventually, I will deal with this problem more than once throughout this work since, as I will later claim, it presents one of the distinct features of “Islam and the environment” that also has something to say about the relationship between science and environmentalism, and the peculiarities of the study of religion in the social context. At this place, I must nevertheless fulfill a somewhat difficult task of condensing the extant literature related to the topic into a general overview necessary for elucidating the purpose and method of my work—a task that is made even more difficult by the fact that a strict line between the *inside* and the *outside* of what will be later defined as the *Islamic discourse on the environment* cannot often be readily drawn.<sup>1</sup> For better clarity, I will divide this literature into three basic categories or approaches.

---

<sup>1</sup> This fact will be discussed in detail and subjected to explanation in Chapter 6.

### 1.1.1.a *Primordialist Approaches: Identifying and Discovering „Environmental Values“ in Islam*

This first and the most widespread approach to the “Islam and the environment” intersection can be defined relatively simply: it is an effort to establish *the view of the environment and environmental questions from the Islamic perspective*. This approach also holds a measure of precedence: it has been the first through which the whole topic entered academic discourse and still can be seen as the most dominant.

Arguably, it can be specified by three concomitant traits. The first is the presence of—quite an apparent—assumption that there indeed *is* something like an “Islamic view” of or “posture” towards environmental matters, either inherently present in the revelation and the tradition or derivable from it in a clear and definite way. The second, and closely related, is the predominant orientation on the canonic scriptures of the Islamic tradition (first and foremost, the Qur’an, to a lesser degree hadith and other texts) as the primary source and subject of inquiry. Finally, the third is a blurred boundary between what may be considered a normative view, expressing a given interpretation of the Islamic scriptures (typically made by or referring to the followers of the traditions as legitimate interpreters) and the empirically oriented description and analysis of such postures. The third trait, in particular, may render this first approach challenging to come to terms with and properly categorize. Thus, it may be, for example, contestable whether one of the first thematizations of the relationship between ecology and Islam by S. H. Nasr ([1968] 1990; see 3.2.1), published in academic format by an author occupying an academic profession, should be regarded as a scholarly work of universal importance and validity, or rather an expression of a normative stance grounded in a relatively distinct religious world-view—both categorizations may appear and change in time. Obviously, this problem is not completely unique and may also concern other fields where empirical or textual analysis meets normative positions (i.e., philosophy, law, or even economy), but it is more pronounced here.

Still, what seems to be decisive, the search for the “Islamic stance on the environment,” has over time gained a significant measure of academic legitimacy

and currency that cannot be ignored. Already in 1967, when the thesis about the purported “anti-ecological” attitude of Christianity was proposed by an American secular historian, Lynn White (1967; discussed in more detail in 3.1.2.c), the notion of inherent posture towards environmental questions harbored by particular cultures and religions was effectively introduced into academia. Over the following decades, the interest in this question widened. Gradually, a characteristic pattern emerged, in which Western academicians issued edited volumes condensing and juxtaposing “views on ecology” by selected religious traditions (Hargrove 1986; Rockefeller and Elder 1992; Kinsley 1995; Coward 1995). In a significant shift from White (1967), these views, presented usually (albeit with some exceptions) by a representative of the given tradition and approached predominantly through the prism of ethics, would be now framed as virtually unequivocally positive and “pro-environmental.” Eventually, this trend, identifiable perhaps best with the practice of comparative religion, culminated between 1996 and 1998 when the Religions of the World and Ecology project was commenced at Harvard Divinity School, involving a total of about 800 interlocutors from among specialists in religion- and environment-related matters and religious leaders and representatives, who met to discuss the theme at a series of conferences (Tucker and Grim, n.d.a; Tucker and Grim n.d.b). The event, representing an evident success from the perspective of organizers, must be seen as seminal for the subsequent development of what gradually acquired contours of a specific subfield of “religion and ecology,” represented up until now by a relatively rich publishing activity, professional organizations such as the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology (YFRE n.d.e) and others, specialized journals like the *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* and even related master and doctoral degree programs (Bauman, Bohannon and O’Brian 2011, 6–7). Already since the incipient steps in the 1980s, Islam was reflected upon as a part of this project, and the “religion and ecology” subfield can be thus regarded as an important catalyst through which the study of the “Islamic view on the environment”—and thereby the whole first approach—became established within academia. A non-negligible role in this process was played by a total of 9 collections of essays published as an outcome of the Harvard University project, devoted to each of the selected religious traditions (Tucker and Grim n.d.b). The

2003 volume on *Islam and Ecology* (Foltz, Denny, and Baharuddin 2003), issued as a part of the series by the Harvard University Press, can be viewed as probably the first high-profile publication that collected a variety of views on the question of “Islam and environment” at one place and would subsequently acquire a status of the reference source on the topic. Various other publications, some appearing before and most after, can be mentioned. These include collections and monographs by Muslim authors published in academic, non-academic, and semi-academic contexts (see, e.g., Khalid and O’Brien 1992; Nasr 1996; Abdel Haleem 1998a; Izzi Dien 2000; Jayyousi 2012; Khalid 2019), an array of articles in journals devoted to Islamic studies (Ouis 1998; Setia 2007; Mangunjaya 2010a; Murad 2012; Saniotis 2012; Yaseen 2014; Hassan 2020), environmental studies (Zaidi 1981; Kula 2001; Damkhi 2008), and other disciplines (Haq 2001; Kula 2003; Islam 2004; Murad 2010; Mohamed 2014; Bsoul et al. 2022), and still other texts appearing in collections, often devoted to the theme of “religion and ecology” (Nasr 1992; Ammar 2001; Izzi Dien 2004; Baharuddin 2011; Parvaiz 2015; Khalid 2017; Quadir 2017; Nasr 2017; Dutton 2022).<sup>2</sup>

Even if these texts differ in many concrete details (and sometimes even in more substantive aspects), all of them have been connected by a common trait. No matter if approaching the theme through the prisms of “environmental ethics” (Damkhi 2008; Mohamed 2014; Yaseen 2014), “ecotheology” (Ouis 1998), “values” (Manzoor 1984), “sustainability” (Quadir 2017), “environmental awareness” (Mangunjaya 2010a), “deep ecology” (Setia 2007), or else, they all depart from a shared assumption that Islam, as a revelation and historical tradition, harbors a set of concepts and norms that speak to environmental matters. Significantly, the authors also view the concrete characteristics of these concepts and norms in a similar way. The Islamic “values” and “ethics” are suggested to be conducive to environmental protection and conservation, promoting responsibility, care, and modesty. They are viewed as discouraging or categorically rejecting harmful practices and attitudes, such as ignorance of environmental matters, pollution, or excessive consumption. Typically, such claims are based on quotations from scriptural sources (used to elucidate, expound, document, and

---

<sup>2</sup> Each of these lists would be significantly expanded if all titles in the given category were quoted. For example, in the case of journal articles, the overall volume counts at least tens and more probably low hundreds of articles (especially once low-profile journals are considered).



“test” the given propositions) and, in basic terms, correspond with the views of the broader Muslim public or other authors and speakers beyond the academic ground. From this widely shared perspective, the relationship between “Islam and the environment” is viewed as tabular. Islam plays a normative role for humans to rectify their relationship with the environment—e.g., by acting as a “steward” (*khalīfa*), sustaining “balance” (*mīzān*) in the environment, and heeding the warning to avoid the “corruption” (*fasād*), which, as the Qur’an states, “has appeared on land and sea as a result of what people’s hands have done” (30:41; cf., e.g., Parvaiz 2015).<sup>3</sup>

In what follows, I will refer to this broad approach to “Islam and the environment” as a *primordialist*. I adopt this term from the debate on the history of nationalism where primordialism signifies a theory (or a popular belief; see Coakley 2018) predicating the existence of nations on deep cultural roots and long-term historical continuity—in contradiction of the position of most of the historians and social scientist who from the second part of the 20th century attribute it to modern ideological construction (see, e.g., Gellner 1983; Anderson 2006). Arguably, even if distinct from an imaginary of a nation, the notion of the specific “Islamic view” or “position” on environmental matters, returning to the Qur’an and prophet Muhammad and defining the particular religious tradition ever since throughout its history may be viewed as analogical. This analogy can, among other things, explain the difficulty of distinguishing between scholarly and popular discourses. As noticed by Coakley, primordialism may play a role in both the explanation of nationalism and of its ideological and doctrinal “ingredient” (2018, 327), which also closely corresponds to the situation in the Islamic environmental discourse. As it will be argued later, the concept of primordialism may also serve as a useful point of departure for the critical debate within the academic discourse on Islam and the environment (see Chapter 6).

It can be already premised that this work will both implicitly and explicitly problematize the primordialist view. What are its merits and limitations? Looking first at the merits, it is undeniable that the literature interrogating the assumed environmental-ethical values of Islam through the interpretations of the scriptures—often by the engaged faith’s representatives—can be credited for

---

<sup>3</sup> The English translation of the Qur’anic verses is based mainly on Muhammad Abdel-Haleem’s translation and *Sahih International* translation, with some modifications.

inciting the interest in the Islam-environment intersection within the academia (and among the wider public as well) as well as for stirring the exchange of ideas and raising some important theoretical and practical questions. Among these are the question of the relevance of the imaginary of nature and the environment within the historical Islamic tradition, the question of the significance of the notion of environmental problems and crisis for religious morality, and, by extension, at least potentially also the question of the broader entanglement of Islam and Islamic history in the environmental context. For all these reasons, this perspective needs to be taken seriously and perhaps also possesses its ongoing currency (which contrasts the position of primordialism in nationalism studies; cf. Coakley 2018, 327–329).

This, however, should not prevent us from acknowledging some of its deficiencies. These seem to spring first and foremost from its prevailing methodology. Already from the first statement on Islam and the environment by Nasr in 1967 ([1967] 1990) up to the reference collection by Foltz, Denny, and Baharuddin (2003) that popularized and cemented the given outlook, it has led to approaching Islamic “environmental tenets” as almost exclusively an inherent component religious tradition itself, derivable from selected excerpts of the revealed or God-inspired scripture. This method has an obvious weakness: the traditional Islamic literature, including the Qur’an and hadith, does not deploy, for example, the concepts of “environment” or “sustainability,” and neither the many others that come up in contemporary discussions. As far as it contains concepts and addresses questions that can be interpreted as “environmentally” relevant (as it indeed does), it does so in far different, often diverse, and sometimes ambiguous terms. This means but one thing: there is a necessary act and process of *interpretation* that is required to explain the meaning of such concepts in relation to contemporary concerns and questions. It can be argued that diminishing and often an effective ignorance of the problem of interpretation also represents the primary deficiency of the primordialist approach, which, faithful to its basic disposition, has mostly merely promoted particular interpretations, together with essentializing and generalizing them as the posture of the tradition itself.

Admittedly, this dimension of the whole approach may have been partly concealed by the practice of giving voices primarily to the Muslim interpreters

themselves to propose the “Islamic view” on environmental problems and leaving upon the “secular” scholars the facilitation and possibly inspiration of this activity, moderation the ensuing debate and potentially commenting on the ideas proposed by the “indigenous” voices (we may look again at Foltz, Denny and Baharuddin’s volume [2003] that represents this format well). Even this practice, however, does not undo the fundamental problem, comprising of the difficulty of establishing who is entitled to speak on behalf of the tradition and represent its assumed “inherent” posture. An application of a more critical outlook can quickly reveal that the views promoted in the debate on the “Islamic view of the environment” belong to a relatively limited group of spokespersons, who, moreover, subscribe to a more or less consistent position: generally, that Islam commands the protection of the environment in all its aspects and represents thus a vital contribution to the global fight against ecological crises. The fact that such interpretations may be perceived as convenient and “desperately needed” (Foltz 2003b, 249), as well as the tacit acknowledgment of the whole field as an “engaged scholarship” (cf. Tucker and Grim n.d.a), may serve as a partial vindication of the whole approach. Still, they do little to tackle the ultimate danger connected with a lack of interpretative criticism in any area: the emergence of a closed circuit of essentialized “truths” that progressively lose their ability to contribute to the solution of problems and may, ultimately, become detached from the reality beyond their immediate academic context. The current state of the field seems at least partly to corroborate such doubts, most markedly by the copious production of literature that brings few novel observations and has a limited outreach beyond the field itself.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to all that, the primordialist approach also naturally raises a set of still broader and arguably more substantive questions. These concern its basic presuppositions and validity: Is it even realistic to view the “Islamic stance”

---

<sup>4</sup> This state stems largely from the preferred method of approaching the subject among many authors. In a typical contribution, the author puts forth his own original interpretation of Islamic “ecothology” based usually on the primary sources of the Qur’an and hadith combined with references to other authors supportive of given conclusions. Often, this means only a reiteration of motives that have been already, in some form, articulated elsewhere without any substantial innovation or polemic. Unfortunately, this uncritical treatment and the absence of polemic, which returns already to the early literature (see again Foltz, Denny and Baharuddin 2003), eventually not only block a meaningful debate and progress but even results in a virtual impasse wherein it is hard to orient in a large amount of literature and identify in it any new elements. This may be close to frustrating for the newcomer to the field and hampers the dialogue with the outside.

on environmental matters as something unified, uncontested, and inherently contained in the tradition? To what degree is such a view—and the related interpretations of the Qur'an and other texts—influenced by contemporary concerns and concepts? And what about Muslims and both historical and contemporary Muslim societies—do they even heed the message of their own religion? Before elaborating on these questions further, it is useful to look for the answers in still other genres of scholarly literature on “Islam and the environment.”

#### *1.1.1.b Empirical Approaches: The Social Fact of Islamic Environmentalism*

Despite its dominance, the above-described approach has not been the only one that has been applied to “Islam and the environment.” Arguably, the emergence of another cluster of methods and studies returns largely to one fact: the conviction about the correspondence of Islamic values and environmentalist tenets has not been limited to academia. At least to some degree, it has also existed as a popular discourse among Muslims and, in some cases, has acquired contours of what may be regarded as a social movement. As such, this discourse and movement has attracted the attention of scholars who became engaged in studying and analyzing it. If we sought the main difference from the previous approach, it would be (except for its comparatively lesser volume and shorter timespan) that the authors within this latter group are usually not particularly interested in the substantive character of the Islamic environmental “values” as such, but instead in their circulation within society and its consequences, i.e., the “social fact” of what may be viewed as specific “Islamic” version of environmentalism. I will refer to this approach as “empirical” or empirically oriented in what follows. This is even though this approach has, in fact, hardly coalesced into a unified field and comprises rather a cluster of studies focused on different geographical areas, varying in used methodologies and not necessarily communicating with each other.

Among them, the largest group of authors have focused on social movements adopting an “Islamic-environmentalist” identity. This may be

exemplified by the evidence of this trend in the UK and the US, with the book-length study by Rosemary Hancock (2018) representing a basic source for both countries and perhaps also a model methodology for studying such movements on the ground (even if other accounts exist, too; see Yazlina 2008; Chowdhury 2013). Hancock's book shows how the "environmental values" of Islam (essentially of a similar kind as those promoted within the primordialist academic debate) serve as a basis of the identity of Islamic environmentalist movements in the UK and the US. Based on extensive field research and its evaluation through the lens of social movements theory, the author provides a significant insight into the functioning of a movement that is relatively small and rather marginal among the wider Muslim community (Hancock 2018, 3–6, 64, 157) but still active and engaged in promoting a specific kind of identity that is construed by discursive practices, enacted by lifestyle patterns and activism, fulfills various functions related to personal identity and morality (152–154), and results in the creation of „imagined communities“ of dispersed individuals (147). As a part of her research, Hancock also addresses the discourse on Islamic "environmental values" itself, which she, however, as it has been already presumed, does not assess in terms of its veracity but treats rather as socially construed (54–68) and existing in two indispensable contexts. These comprise environmentalism as a global and universalist discourse and movement (20–37) and the socio-cultural specificities of Islamic communities in the Western milieu (38–53). As a part of that, Hancock's account also brings about some generalizable observations. Except for the basic insight into the scope of the phenomena, she paints a picture of a more diverse movement and discourse than the notion of unified Islamic ethics grounded in textual tradition would suggest. As she writes: "Just as 'Islam' cannot be conceived as a unified and homogenous entity, and the global environmental 'movement' is also neither unified nor homogenous, so too Islamic environmentalism reflects the diversity of both Islam and environmentalism" (147). Overall, although not focused on "Islam and the environment" in its broad sense but rather on well-demarked and concrete social phenomenon, which can be termed as the "Western" or "diasporic" Islamic bottom-up environmental activism, Hancock's account can be viewed as a significant contribution to the study of the question as a whole. This is not only by comprehensively and critically covering how Islamic "environmental ethics" is

perceived and enacted in practice in a specific case but also by showing the merit of such a study that problematizes the primordialist assumptions about the subject. Still, this has one apparent deficiency: it is geographically limited. What about other geographical and cultural regions of the Muslim world?

Regarding these, virtually only one region has been addressed in a way similar to the Euro-American region: Indonesia. Approximately since 2010, scholarly accounts attesting to the existence of what may be viewed as Islamic environmental activism in this populous Southeast Asian country began to appear. In one of the first studies, Mangunjaya and McKay describe three essential components of this activism: the educational activity comprising of incorporation of environmental tenets into curricula of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) as well as other training activities, the on-the-ground projects (particularly tree-planting along with sustainable agricultural practices; all of these often run also by or in cooperation with *pesantren*), and finally the advocacy comprising of releasing of fatwas and engaging in *dakhwa* (the “mission”; an equivalent of Arabic *da‘wa*) by religious bodies like the Indonesian Council of Ulama and others (see Mangunjaya and McKay 2012, 295–303). This account has since been supplemented by a number of other texts. A vivid field research-based analysis of the tropes and themes actualized in the *pesantren*-connected activities is given by Anna Gade (2012), further supplemented by an account of advocacy discourse based on Islamic law (2015). Still other information appears in the works of Reuter (2015) Smith (2017) Amri (2019) and Dewayanti and Saat (2020) and other, more narrow-focused case studies (Herdiansyah, Jokopitoyo, and Munir 2016; Nilan 2021; Anabarja Mubah 2021; Grossman 2019; Fikri, and Colombijn 2021; Bagir, Northcott, and Wijssen ed. 2021).

What overall picture of the Indonesian “Islamic environmentalism” do these sources provide? This, in fact, varies from case to case. Generally, the greater part of the studies render the „eco-Islam“ in Indonesia as a prospective and growing movement that has a positive social impact on the environmental conscience and practices in the country, and most of them chronicle and recount its proliferation by mentioning particular organizations and activities. Some of them proceed by an application of given theoretical frameworks like „globalization of religion“ in the case of Gade (2015), a cognate local-global

dichotomy that appears in the work of Smith (2017), or the notion of „governmentality“ that is in turn used by Amri (2019). If there is any deficiency in these works, it is that neither of them arguably includes the social context of these activities in a sufficient way—it is, for example, hard to acquire a clear sense of their scale and overall impact within Indonesian society. The prevalence of progressive framing, moreover, raises a question of whether the overall account is not skewed towards positive examples that may not be altogether representative (as some authors also partly acknowledge; see Mangunjaya and McKay, 303).

This is also something echoed in Dewayanti and Saat’s reflection on the theme (2020). This locates the “eco-Islam” in the broader landscape of the plurality of faith-based organizations in Indonesia that, as the authors point out, possess their own interests in promoting particular versions of Islamic teachings and are implicated in a variety of political and cultural conflicts (Dewayanti and Saat 2020, 3). It is on this basis that the authors also put in doubt the semblance of unity, common purpose, and unquestioned effectivity of the „Environmental Islam“ in the Indonesian context by pointing out the existence of „organic“ faith-based and non-Islamic initiatives tied to a younger generation, emerging around local issues, and their lack of rapport and with the mainstream discourse promoted in the top-down regime by the major nation-wide organizations like the Indonesian Council of Ulama. On this point, they also criticize these organizations for superficiality and „theologizing every debate on the environment instead of furthering understanding about the issues scientifically“ (Dewayanti and Saat, 6). Similar critical observations, touching on the limited scale and outreach of the otherwise prospective local faith-based projects and their inability to address larger issues (like coal mining) also appear elsewhere (Grossman 2019; Fikri and Colombijn 2021),<sup>5</sup> and most recently and extensively in Bagir, Northcott and Wijzen’s collection (2021), which includes a set of fieldwork-based studies that complicate the simplistic view of “Islamic” in enacting of the local environmentalism. Finally, the Indonesian landscape is also commented upon in Gade’s latest book (2019), which, however, is not much concerned with providing

---

<sup>5</sup> The skepticism of Fikri and Colombijn (2021) towards Indonesian Islamic environmentalism is though based more on anecdotal evidence than on a methodologically sound empirical study.

its systematic account but rather makes it a part of her broader argument (see also below).

Overall, even though a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the kind of Hancock's (2018) is not available, the extant studies provide us with a somewhat detailed and partly multi-perspective account that attests to the existence of the „Islam and the environment“ discourse and movement in Indonesia and a measure of its relevance (which is though disputed). Unfortunately, what has been said about the coverage of the “Western” movements holds also in this case—the phenomena are studied mainly in isolation, and its broader global context is addressed only marginally and in hints (like those revealing connections to the Anglo-Saxon Islamic environmentalist milieu and international ENGOs [see Mangunjaya and McKay 291–292; 296–302; Gade 2015]).

Finally, regarding other Muslim regions, the coverage is, at most, scarce. Haq et al. (2020) thus present a (partly anecdotic) account of environmental activism and environmental problems in Pakistan and casually intersperse it with „environmental“ quotations from the Qur'an but fail to provide a concrete example of faith-based movements. Sayem's article „Islamic Teaching and Practice of Environmental Ethics in Bangladesh“ (2018) essentially does the same. In both cases, the existence of an “eco-Islam” movement appears more as a project or a *wish*. Does that mean that they effectively disprove the existence of such movements in the respective regions? Perhaps so. Looking at the culturally and politically significant region of the Middle East (MENA), evidence of „Islamic environmentalism“ in the form of a tangible social movement is largely absent from the literature, too. This also accords with the conclusion of Donatella Vincenti, who in her dissertation based on field research, observes that the activism based on the environmental „values“ of Islam, as to some degree evidenced in Euro-American and Indonesian contexts, has no counterpart in this particular region—or at least not among environmental activist groups and communities studied by the author (Vincenti 2017, 322–323).

Regarding the issue of Muslim environmentalist social movements, a provisional conclusion drawn from the extant literature would be that even though such movements exist, they seem to be rather small in scale and limited



more or less only to two specific regions of Anglo-Saxon countries and Indonesia. This, of course, raises several questions. The first one may concern the “primordialist” claim debated in the previous section: If Islam is so strongly “pro-environmental,” why do there seem to be relatively few Muslims engaged in faith-based activism tackling the paramount environmental problems of today? And even if we would not take such a claim entirely seriously, it is still possible to ask: why there and not elsewhere? What renders the US, UK, and Indonesia more fertile ground for the emergence of “Islamic environmentalism” than other Muslim regions? Unfortunately, the literature gives no clear answer to this question, not least because of the lack of a dialogue between the authors focusing on the respective regions. A particular possibility that should not be excluded is, however, that there are still other expressions of this “environmentalism” that evade the typical imaginaries of “eco-movements” derived from the Western models. Indeed, the scope of the phenomena seems to widen once we abandon the restrictive category of movement and focus instead on the evidence of representation of “Islam and the environment” in texts and pronouncements, that is, on the level of *discourse*.

Such is also the predominant perspective of Anne-Marie Schwencke, whose work (2012), although published only in non-standard, unedited form on the webpage of the Leiden Institute for Religious Studies, must still be counted among significant and thought-provoking contributions to the topic. In fact, Schwencke may be regarded as still virtually the only author (perhaps with the partial exception of Gade [2019]; see below) who has attempted to make a systematic survey of “green Islam” as a global discourse and trace its expressions across multiple spatial contexts and niches of Islamic identity, bringing some important observations. First of all, Schwencke illustrates that the outreach of the “eco-Islamic” discourse is, in fact, much greater than the focus on tightly-knit activist groups would suggest and involves a variety of actors who, in diverse ways, actualize and adapt the trope of environmental “values” of Islam, sometimes to different ends. Not less significantly, Schwencke also shows that this discourse possesses a particular history and undergoes development. This provides a picture wherein the first connection of Islam and ecology can be traced back to the 1960s to the work of S. H. Nasr, which appears again in the 1980s in

documents sponsored by the government of Saudi Arabia and international ENGOs like the World Wildlife Fund (Schwencke 2012, 10–18), is temporarily raised by Muslim states via conferences around 2000 (28–31, 35–36) and about at the same time also generates the activist subcultures in the West and Indonesia, analyzed in the previously discussed studies (26–27, 39–41, 45–47, 49–50). These are then shown to exist in parallel with still other actualizations and expressions of the same discourse, including in the academic debate on “religion and ecology” (18–20) but also, e.g., the statements of popular Muslim personalities and in the blogosphere and on the internet (50–56).

In this way, Schwencke shows the above-discussed phenomena to occur within a broader heterogeneous milieu that seems to be at the same time global and tied to the Islamic tradition, being one of the markers of its cultural transformation throughout the modern age (the “globalized eco-Islam” is also the central explanatory framework used by the author; 2012, 61). Eventually, the only shortage of the study seems to be that the coverage of many important themes is rather patchy (not least due to the limited extent of the paper combined with the breath of its scope), and many questions are rather just raised than resolved (as it is also continuously acknowledged by the author [Schwencke 2012, 61–62, and also elsewhere]). Unfortunately, Schwence did not continue her work, and neither has been followed by a survey of comparable scope.<sup>6</sup>

Of other works focused on the discursive level of “Islam and the environment,” it is not possible to omit the contribution of Emmanuel Karagiannis, who, in his recently published book (2023; see also 2015), focuses on the adoption of environmental discourses (and in some cases environmental policies) by Islamist actors and as such introduces into the problem a new area, ignored by most other authors. Such a perspective further complicates the imaginary of uncontested Islamic “ecothology,” partly by further exemplifying the scope of diversity of environmental “values” embraced by Muslim actors and partly by showing that Islamists, as the self-appointed promoters of Islam in 6 Admittedly, the attempts at a broader description of the discourse, to varying extents and depths and in different qualities, appear also in other (some of them recounted) works (Hancock 2018, 61–66; Idllalène 2021, 1–8; Gade 2019, 37–56, 65–77). However, these typically do not match Schwencke’s work in scope, are not methodologically systematic, and are based on secondary sources. The even more brief histories sometimes incorporated into the „primordialist“ treatments of Islamic environmental ethics obviously suffer from the same deficiency in addition to selectivity for the sake of supporting the “primordialist” argument (see e.g., Kaminski 2018, 173–181).

politics and the public sphere, paradoxically, display only a limited interest in engaging with the topic (cf. Karagiannis 2023, 168–170, 179).

Finally, to make the overview of empirical approaches complete, in a few cases, authors attempted to employ quantitative sociological methods, surveying the opinions on selected environmental problems and matters among the Muslim public to test the purported inherent „environmental nature“ of Islam as a tradition (see Skirbekk and Pędziwiatr 2018; Koehrsen 2021). These efforts have, however, brought few definite or persuasive answers, not least given the obvious methodological obstacles connected to them (even if we put aside the significant variance and absence of unambiguous trends and differences, it is difficult to attribute the quantitative data unambiguously to religious influence).

To summarize, the scholarship produced within the empirical approach provides us with a picture of the “Islam and the environment” intersection largely different from the primordialist one. This does not comprise not of “values” for once and all ingrained in the Islamic tradition but of actors and movements that, dispersed across an ample social space, articulate and embrace such values, make them circulate, and draw on them in justifying a variety of social practices and strategies of agitation and advocacy. The extant literature also provides us with some insight into the circulation and variance of the discourse and movement of “Islamic environmentalism,” especially in the valuable studies of the activist movements in the Anglo-Saxon countries and Indonesia. Yet, arguably, it also leaves many questions unanswered. Despite the attested global occurrence of the whole discourse and movement, few authors attempted to address it in an aggregate manner and shed light on how it evolved as one of the peculiar manifestations of modern Muslim and Islamic identity. In fact, the work of Schwencke (2012) remains almost singular in this regard even more than ten years after its publication (which, unfortunately, makes it outdated), and other authors have scarcely attempted to integrate their findings into its (or a similar) wider framework. As far as “Islamic environmentalism” is documented in individual instances, the ideational, genealogical, and organizational links between these clusters remain rather unclear. The geographical coverage also remains uneven, with only a few studies focusing on the regions outside the preferred localities of Indonesia and the West (for example, only Vincenti [2018] and Karagiannis

[2015] tentatively focus on the MENA region). Moreover, the current state of research also says relatively little about the social impact of the “eco-Islamic” discourse and its ability to incite a tangible social change. Many studies (and this includes even Schwencke’s [2012]; among few exceptions figures Hancock [2018] and Dewayanti and Saat [2020]) thus, for example, provide the reader with a sense of ascent of the Islamic “eco-movement,” but this seems not to be supported by tangible evidence and may be viewed as more or less exaggerated, especially in hindsight. Equally missing then appears to be the effort to integrate the available information about „Islamic environmentalism“ with some relevant contexts. These may comprise the cognate phenomena in the form of other Islamic social and political movements and discourses (these are addressed tentatively only by Schwencke [2012] and Karagiannis [2015; 2023]) but also the broader landscape of global environmental politics and discourses (works by Vincenti [2017] and Hancock [2018] do this only to a limited degree). Ultimately, this can be related to the fact that the overall amount of the research has been rather small (notably much smaller than in the case of literature focusing on the environmental ethics of Islamic scriptures). Remarkably, virtually no attempts to research the phenomena have emerged from the field of Islamic studies, which otherwise displays curiosity about the novel forms of religious discourse and to which the intersection between “Islam and the environment” thus may present a “blind spot” (authors of most of the above-quoted studies are in fact of different specializations). Notwithstanding this, the findings and observations provided by the empirically oriented scholarship will still serve as a solid basis and important resource for discussions in this work.

#### *1.1.1.c Still Other Views and Methodologies: Novel and Critical Approaches*

As the last category of the extant literature on „Islam and the environment,“ it is necessary to mention a rather miscellaneous group of works. What these have in common is, ultimately, that they cannot be strictly included in any of the previous categories. They either combine some aspects of both,

critically address the current field, or attempt to develop a new theoretical approach to the study of the question.

The first broad cluster of such texts may be related to what can be identified with the conceptual criticism of the primordialist approach described above. The first programmatic outline of this critique appears probably in 2011, in a collection by young scholars identifying with the „religion and ecology“ field but proposing to move it methodologically further (Bauman, Bohannon, and O’Brian 2011a). Not limited specifically to Islam, the critique touches on two distinct points. The first one is the very concept of “religion,” which, especially in its identification with “world religions” or traditions, as it is argued, limits the scope of the research and debate to the pre-selected cases and frameworks and excludes lived experiences reaching beyond what is usually construed as “orthodoxy” of whatever kind. The second and related one is the predominant focus on textual tradition as a source of normative “values” and postures interpreted by a narrow group of speakers that, again, may not actually correspond to the real experiences and systems of meaning within concrete communities (Bauman, Bohannon and O’Brian 2011b, 11).<sup>7</sup> Focusing specifically on Islam, the same argumentation is repeated in a contribution by Finnegan (2011), who demonstrates the possible inadequacy of the “textual” approach in relation to the actual experience of three faith-based Muslim farming communities in the US that engage in realizing environmentally conscious lifestyles. As the author argues, “By focusing on the textual tradition and perceived mainstream, scholars miss the lived experience of many Muslims, the diversity of interpretations of Muslim texts, the other resources that influence Muslims’ interaction with and ideas about the environment, the role of practice in the lives of many Muslims, and the negotiation that happens among religious believers as they attempt to live their religious and environmental ideas” (Finnegan 2011, 71). A similar critique subsequently appears in a limited number of other texts. Bagir and Martiam’s assessment (2016), appearing in one of the multiple collections on “religion and ecology”, represents in this regard perhaps the most systematic critique of the

<sup>7</sup> A practical example of such redefining knowledge can be found in the account of Khan (2014), undertaking research in the Jamuna river basin in Bangladesh: While the Muslim villagers at the site of the research consider climate change a “poisoned knowledge from the West,” they express more acceptance to other creatures (namely dogs) than the trained-to-be-environmentally-conscious Western researcher. This obviously upends certain aspects of prevailing imagery about environmentalism and environmental ethics in relation to Islam.

primordialist approach and many of its assumptions. This critique (by which the authors directly confront the literature emerging within the “religion and ecology” field) begins by treating “Islamic environmentalism” as a contemporary discourse that the authors (in what is a unique attempt to extend the interpretation in this direction) loosely place into “the broader landscape of contemporary Islamic thought, which consists mostly of responses to modernity,” observing its relatedness to other debates, namely on Islam and science and Islamic economics (Bagir and Martiam 2016, 79–80). Along that, the authors also observe the apologetic dimension of the discourse<sup>8</sup> and its necessarily limited ability to pose an answer to environmental dilemmas, proposing that “[it] is anachronistic to think that a centuries-old tradition should be prepared with answers to any emergent question, especially questions that have not yet been asked, at least not in the magnitude of today’s environmental crisis” (80). In the rest of their text, the authors continue by, first, exposing a number of conceptual discrepancies appearing in the primordialist construction of Islamic environmental “values” (e.g., the controversial and largely unresolved question of hierarchy between human and non-human parts of creation [see 81–82]), and, second, by comparing the normative discourse to observations of the environmentalist-minded communities “on the ground” (the authors draw here on some empirically oriented studies discussed in the previous section [see 83–85]). Largely in concord with Bauman, Bohannon, and O’Brian (2011b) and Finnegan (2011), they consequently call for the rethinking of the pre-established conceptualizations within the field and widening the debate and research to embrace phenomena that fall out of the mainstream imaginaries of “Islam and the environment” (Bagir and Martiam 2016, 85–86).

Looking at these examples, it is thus possible to observe that what they have in common is, on the one hand, the commitment to the field of “religion and ecology” but, on the other, a demand for its substantive reform. Arguably, a lot of what the authors call for is realized in the study of Hancock (2018), even though in the form of “mere” sociological observation, uncommitted to the “religion and ecology” debate and its concerns (Hancock is not interested in whether the practices of the US and UK “eco-Muslims” possess some universal validity or

---

<sup>8</sup> Which I will discuss extensively later; see 5.3.

significance). Also, the already mentioned collection of Bagir, Northcott, and Wijzen (2021), presenting a valuable empirical contribution to the study of the situation in Indonesia (and one not limited to Islam), can be regarded as essentially an application of the “reformed” religion and ecology approach in practice, documenting a set of localized enactments of activist agency that falls outside of the normative preconceptions.

Anna Gade’s book-length study, *Muslim Environmentalisms* (2019), largely follows this critical strand, too. Gade’s book, which has been hailed by one of the doyens of the scholarly writing on Islam and the environment, R. Foltz, as „the first ever book-length critical scholarly treatment of discussions on the relationship of Islamic values to environmental ones“ (Foltz 2020, 296) cannot be certainly ignored as it indeed represents not only an expansive study of “Islamic environmentalism” made from a particular, critical standpoint (standing perhaps along Schwencke’s [2010] and Hancock’s [2018] studies) but also a bold statement aiming at assessing and categorizing the phenomena as a whole in universal terms that has already been influential and perhaps even succeeded to at least partly set the tone of the general debate. As indicated by her above-quoted works (2012; 2015), Gade conducted long-term field research in Indonesia, studying Muslim actors and communities and their encounters with and responses to the environmental condition and environmentalist discourses. It is also this experience upon which she programmatically bases her key propositions (cf. Gade 2019, 13), even though her book, by and large, is not only about Indonesian Islam. In a noticeable reverberation with the tradition of classical cultural anthropology (to which she consciously appeals [see 5–13]), Gade aspires to derive from her in-depth study of culturally autonomous communities generalizable statements. As such, her work, drawing on decolonization ethos, proposes to regard the Islamic conceptualizations of the environment and environmental matters (i.e., the *Muslim environmentalisms* programmatically understood in a pluralist way) as of universal relevance, namely to “shift the foundation of humanistic fields [i.e. within environmental humanities]” through their “Islamicization” and “re-theorize key questions at the frontier of the field, like the most pressing ethical and humanistic questions of environmental justice and anticipation of dire consequence that guide the cutting-edge of inquiry today” (1–2). “Muslim

environmentalisms” and Islam, more broadly, conceived of as “autonomous systems of knowledge” (1), are thus assumed as an antidote and corrective to the “Eurocentric and colonial humanistic paradigms” (5) and its expressions in the “mainstream” environmental humanities that, according to Gade, encounter their limits in the dealing with an apocalyptic environmental change (2–3). In making such a proposition, Gade, however, does not draw on the field and discourse on “Islam and ecology,” as it has been presented above, but rather on her aspiration to wholly redefine the current predominant narratives about it. Accordingly, she uses the phrase “Islam *and* the environment” (cf. 14) with an apparent irony to signify a discourse that she deems to be primarily an artificial construct devised by Western academicians and NGOs to promote an alien form of identity among indigenous populations. The scope of Gade’s critique is hard to recount succinctly. However, it targets much of the genres of both empirically oriented and primordialist literature on the matter, including the statements of Muslim environmentalists like Abdul-Matin (2010) or Nasr ([1968] 1990) that, in her view, mostly just “relabel” and reapply” “normative and secular notions like the European sublime and so on,” leading to the “propagation of non-Islamic idioms that Muslim messages are either rooted in or react to” (Gade 2019, 14). Against that, Gade attempts to introduce her own reading the matter, deconstructing the basic “secular” concepts like “the environment” together with the tropes circulating within the Islamic discourse itself like “stewardship,” and widening the scope of relevant meanings considered to be relevant to include, e.g., the eschatological themes, as well as imaginaries and practices ordinarily deemed as “unorthodox” or eclectic.

Although contributive in its radical theoretical questioning and many of its propositions, Gade’s work, too, must be viewed critically in some of its aspects. While warranted in a number of instances and based on an apparent study of significant swaths of the discourse on “Islam and the environment,” Gade’s critique of much of what she characterizes (among other terms) as “neocolonialist” and “interventionist manipulation of Islamic doctrine and practice” (Gade 2019, 56, 76), seems to be too blanket and, overall, skewed towards the ambitious polemical intention of the whole statement, that, through its conceptually dense language, seems too often to eschew the sufficient



documentation of many of its claims (many of which can be simultaneously read as allegations). Perhaps even more significantly, Gade's text also seems to be unclear in terms of the eventual results of the grave and broad reconceptualization that it proposes. Thus, the "salient understandings of the environment" based on a "millennium of Muslims' Qur'anic ecology" and "freed from the burden of translation into Europe's globally parochial idioms of postmedieval enlightenment" (ibid., 76) can be indeed finally found on many pages of Gade's book, but are—as it will be more extensively discussed later—eventually relatively close to the propositions to be found elsewhere within the "Islam and the environment" discourse, no matter how often the author claims otherwise.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, Gade's contribution to the debate, as much as it has been lauded from some directions, seems ambiguous and contestable (for this reason, I have also not included the work among the empirically oriented approaches to the topic).

A similarly specific attitude towards the question is also characteristic of another recently published book by Samira Idllalène (2021). Written from the perspective of comparative law, Idllalène aims to discover possibilities of widening the scope of the "Islamic environmental law" and applying it in practice, not least in climate change mitigation through the *Atmospheric Waqf Doctrine*. The author's argument for that is both the possibility of such undertaking and, even more importantly, its practical benefits as, it is argued, the statutory law is generally not enforced in Muslim countries, which the resort to Islamic legal system and terminology could rectify. The method of the work is an attempt to "revive" Islamic environmental law through comparison with institutions of common law, namely the Public Trust Doctrine (ibid., 28–30). In distinction to Gade's contribution (which it does not comment on), Idllalène largely adopts the environmental "values" and "tenets" of Islam as they have developed within the mainstream discourse, even if she also proposes to widen them, especially through the systematic inclusion of legal categories on which her work specializes. As

---

<sup>9</sup> To put forth but one example, Gade states that „past and present approaches to Islam and the environment, including those of Muslims that reflect Anglo-environmentalism, fail to emphasize, and often fail even to acknowledge, the prominent eschatological dimensions of the Qur'an's message,“ exposing it subsequently as a theme of central importance characteristic of the „fundamental Qur'anic“ and „distinctively Muslim“ conceptions (Gade 2019, 82–83). The actual evidence will, however, later show that the reflection of the eschatological dimension is not so absent from the texts that Gade refers to—and this is even if we would assume that there are definite normative criteria for categorizing not mentioning it as a „failure.“

such, the book thus represents a conscious effort to construe a new legal discourse and may be viewed as rather unrelated to many questions that have been discussed above. Still, as it will be further argued, Idllalène's study may, in some ways, signify potential new ways for the whole field. As such, it will be discussed together with Gade's contribution later (see 6.2).

Finally, in debating contributions that evade typical categories but still have something to say about "Islam and the environment," the scholarship of Sarra Tlili certainly has to be mentioned. Especially in her 2012 volume on *Animals in the Qur'an* (Tlili 2012) but also in other works (2010; 2014; 2018), the American scholar presents an in-depth survey of the semantic, ontological, and ethical relationships surrounding the animal world in the Qur'anic scripture, and its later receptions and interpretations in exegetical literature. Arguably, also Tlili's work may be viewed as imbued with a programmatic aim: to discover the possibility of a non-anthropocentric reading of the Qur'anic message. As such, it could be easily mistaken with the primordialist approach from which it is, however, distinct by one significant trait. Unlike most other authors who invoke the textual tradition to promote their arguments, Tlili does not necessarily assume the "Islamic" ethical posture to be one and unified but acknowledges its historical character. Corresponding to that is also the author's methodology, which surpasses others by the degree of rigor and critical outlook. Tlili thus, for example, admits that the prevailing view of animals among Muslims is one of inferiority and that of man one of exceptionality and supremacy (cf. 2012, 3, ix–xi) and investigates deep historical roots of this outlook going back to the early exegeses. Consequently, her argumentation both implicitly and explicitly contests some of the key concepts underpinning the primordialist conceptions of Islamic "values" connected to the environment. This is, for example, the case of the key concept of "stewardship" (*khilāfa*) that plays a central role in many other interpretations, which, however, in Tlili's view, contravene the original meaning of the Qur'anic message (2012, 115–119) and ignore the ambiguity ascribed to the concept in the older exegetical tradition. Arguably, Tlili's thorough historical attitude demonstrates both the possibility and the merit of critical methods and debate in shedding light on the Islamic tradition's relation to environmental issues and

matters, which has been largely missing in the dominant stream of primordialist literature. Her work will also be discussed in more detail later (see 6.2).

Overall, as the last set of examples shows, the academic discourse on “Islam and the environment” has, along with the uncritical primordialist search for universal “values” of the tradition and the separate area of empirical inquiries of extant discourses and social movements, involved also attempts to critically question general assumptions about the issue and propose new methods of its study. If we sought their common denominator, it would be perhaps the effective merger of some of the aspects of both of the previous approaches and an attempt to reconcile what in the works of other authors appear as rather two disparate and, to a certain degree, contravening perspectives. While Finnegan (2011), Bagir and Martiam (2016), Gade (2019), and Bagir, Northcott, and Wijzen (2021b) propose for this sake a less rigid approach towards the Muslim environmental “values” that would reflect on the diversity and versatility of the actual lived experience, Tlili (2012), drawing on a rigorous textual criticism and comparative methods (that make many other writings on Islamic environmental values look superficial in comparison), shows this diversity and versatility to be present also in the historical textual tradition itself, which implicitly relativizes the current predominant imaginaries of Islamic “ecothology” and serves her as a basis for elaborating a more radical and ecocentric version of the Qur’anic animal ethics. Still from a different side, Idllalène (2021) presents a project of legal adjustments for Muslim countries that willfully combine the historical heritage of shar‘ia with the Western-originating common law tradition. At the same time, it is not difficult to see that the “critical” literature is represented only by a small number of individual authors and studies and represents a diverse set of perspectives that do not necessarily communicate well with each other. As such, it hardly gives a comprehensive answer about the relationship between “Islam and the environment”, too, even if it certainly widens the scope of the discussion and raises many critical questions.

### **1.1.2 Questions Asked and Questions Unanswered: The Aims of the Work**

In what preceded, I have surveyed most of the extant academic literature on „Islam and the environment. “ As it has been shown, there is no scarcity of it. What is, though, the overall picture that this literature gives? Arguably, such a picture is hard to assemble from the extant sources. By far, the most abundant volume of literature addresses a seemingly simple question that can be loosely defined as follows: “What is the view of environmental issues in Islam”? At face value, the question looks relatively straight and simple, and indeed, the approach that has been designated as “primordialist” has offered an extensive answer. Nonetheless, this answer has been simultaneously shown to suffer from a significant problem: the unaddressed question of interpretation that renders it suspicious from the perspective of more sophisticated methodology and susceptible to conveying unreflected doctrinal and ideological commitments. The following two approaches, after all, illustrate this problem well: the empirically oriented one by demonstrating the heterogeneous and socially conditioned character of such “views” as well as their limited currency, and the “critical” one by questioning the general assumptions and methodology upon which such claims are based. This, however, does not mean that the consulted sources would ultimately provide anything like an overall picture of “Islamic environmentalism.” There have been identified several discrepancies and unresolved issues surrounding a phenomenon that does not even possess a common name and definition. The resolution of these discrepancies has not been helped by the state of the field (if something like that can even be identified), being largely fragmented around disparate areas of concern. Overall, the current literature, with only partial or contestable exceptions of Schwencke (2012) and Gade (2019), does not offer a sufficiently comprehensive and critical account of either “Islam and the environment” as an area of study and academic topic, or “Islamic environmentalism” as a social fact. And this is even though the phenomena, no matter how we define it, manifestly exists and relates to a theme that is timely and palpably important: the intersection between religion, as one of the factors and determinants of human beliefs and practice, and ecology, as the sphere of human

interaction with the non-human and natural—this all at a time when the ability of human societies to change their natural environment is more pronounced than ever and possesses many worrying aspects. Given these concerns, it is useful to ask: what does the conjunction of “Islam and the environment” bring into this situation? Is it a set of uncontested *ethical values* already inspiring both the individual and collective response to the ecological crisis among Muslims and all the others who heed them? Is it a new Islamic social *movement* bound to transform the face of this religious tradition over the coming years? Is it a *speculative discourse* devised by preachers and intellectuals for apologetic purposes with little tangible impact on the social reality on the ground? Or is it a *project* connecting a variety of actors and motivations with an uncertain outcome?

Admittedly, providing an adequate assessment of diverse and heterogeneous phenomena that spans multiple contexts, is still in the process of development, and has hitherto remained under the radar of mainstream academic interest is not easy. Still, the presented work draws on a conviction that a more detailed study of “Islam and the environment” (however we define it) is worth undertaking not only for its own sake but also for the additional contribution it can bring in other spheres—like the study of environmentalism and Islam in general. Therefore, without aspiring to answer all the questions definitively, the presented dissertation attempts to push the research in this area further. And this is specifically through three concomitant aims that will also guide the work’s composition and method.

### *1.1.2.a Adding History*

Arguably, the largest blind spot in the study of “Islam and the environment” is its interrogation with a sustained and systematic regard for the historical dimension of the whole problem. In fact, few, if any, texts debated above display such regard concerning either Islamic environmentalism as a movement or the scholarly literature that has been addressing the topic. In part, this sidelining of the historical and temporal dimension may be explained by the very disposition of the debate that proceeds “dogmatically” rather than genealogically. Especially when the question is defined as that of “values” and

authoritative statements derived from the primary Islamic source texts, historical analysis does not seem to matter. Still, the two latter approaches have not proceeded in this direction much further, as neither of them has been using historical analysis and critique as their preferred method, often simply because they focus on contemporary problems and themes. What is then missed by ignoring the history?

In fact, the potential contribution of historical perspective can be illustrated in a couple of examples, related primarily to the existence of “Islamic environmentalism” as a social phenomenon. Taking up the themes that have been discussed above, the presence of the Islamic environmentalist movement has been documented in the US and the UK with good insights into its inner structure. A fair amount of information exists about the same trend in Indonesia, pointing, among other things, to particular differences in its structure from the West. There are also hints of the existence of “Islamic environmentalism” in different contexts, namely in the Middle East (though, as it seems, without its otherwise present “activist” undercurrent). Finally, there is also the relatively widespread tradition of writing on the matter in academia, the part of which manifests strong similarity to the otherwise circulated “Islamic environmentalist” assumptions. There is, however, a marked gap in investigating their mutual links. This raises a number of questions: Are the movements in particular areas related to each other? Do they return to a single origin? Or did the “Islamic environmentalism” spring spontaneously in many places, perhaps confirming the thesis about the inherent “pro-environmental” character of the Islamic tradition? Arguably, these questions cannot be answered without going further back to history and attempting to describe the temporal genesis of these particular discourses and movements.

Along with that, the relevance of the historical perspective may be further highlighted by the fact that the Islamic discourse on the environment is actually not all that new. It is, for example, widely agreed (and with the most probability correct) that S. H. Nasr was the first to treat the question of the environment and ecological crisis from the Islamic perspective in the 1960s (see [1968] 1990). Hence, does “Islamic environmentalism,” at least in its current, contemporary form, derive from this primeval contribution? Arguably, many other questions of a similar kind may be asked. What has been the role of the brochure

titled *Islamic Principles for the Conservation of the Natural Environment* sponsored by the Saudi government and issued in 1983 (Ba Kader et al. 1983), which many authors identify as an early articulation of Islamic environmental “values,” in the proliferation of the discourse? Does it somehow relate to Nasr? And what motivated the Saudi government to issue such a document in the first place? And from yet a different context: how did well-known Muslim environmentalists like Fazlun Khalid start their careers as Muslim environmental activists and succeed in bringing the theme into the center of broader popular interest? What distinguishes Khalid from similar activists in Indonesia, and is there a relationship between both?

It seems clear that without addressing all these questions, the assessment of the phenomena as a whole and its individual expressions is bereft of an important context. And as far as the *genealogy* of the contemporary Islamic discourse tends to be shrouded in darkness, the theme is difficult to handle in terms of analysis. While this does not mean that many of the studies would be completely ignorant of the fact that Islamic texts and movements related to the question of the environment occur in a sequence and develop in time, little has been done to investigate this sequence systematically, especially on the macro-level, and with the application of historical perspective and methods. Filling this gap will be the first main aim of this work. By picking up what has been done and by collection of additional data and their analysis in a broader historical context, I will thus attempt to chart the temporal process of the articulation and proliferation of what may be conceived of as the “eco-Islamic” discourse in its multiple spatially dispersed varieties. This historical perspective will also serve as a basic grounding for all the other inquiries.

### 1.1.2.b *Adding Contexts*

If the history of the Islamic movement and discourse addressing environmental issues is largely missing, the same can be said about many particular contexts that seem to be relevant for assessing the phenomena. Arguably, there are two main and immediate contexts. The first one is the broader relationship to *Islam* as a historical tradition, manifested in the multiplicity of its

components and expressions and its evolution over time. Certainly, there are many questions to be asked in this regard. How widespread is the discourse among Muslims, and how important is it? Is it evenly represented among Muslim society, or is it characteristic rather for specific strata or groups? Do other religious identities and doctrinal commitments influence its form? Which ones of such specific cultural influences affected and perhaps motivated the actors who first promoted the discourse and initiated the emergence of social movements? How does the discourse relate to the cultural change undergone by Islam in the latter part of the 20th century? And are there any analogs in terms of other Islamic discourses and movements? An essentially similar barrage of questions relates also to the second crucial context—that of *environmentalism*. How has the Islamic environmental discourse been linked to this equally as diverse and multifaceted social movement and discourse that has brought a paradigmatic shift into modern societies from the second half of the 20th century? Both of these contexts are apparently relevant, especially as one is skeptical of viewing „Islamic environmentalism“ as an expression of essential values originating in the distant past or the revelation itself. But arguably, even from the primordialist perspective, an interrogation of the multiple causal and ideational links related to the *current* discourses may be vital and contributive.

The importance of such contexts has been noted by at least some of the authors who assessed the phenomena from a critical perspective, and some them have been elaborated on (see Schwencke 2012; Hancock 2018; Gade 2019). However, the fundamental problems of the lack of systematization, integration, and comprehensiveness apply in this area, like in the previous one. There are, moreover, questions that have not been addressed very much. Among them, one may be especially interesting even to outsiders in the field. What is the overall significance of the phenomena and its social impact? Does “Islamic environmentalism,” in any of its forms, influence environmental policies at given places or play any similar major role? And if not, can it be expected to play it in the near future? A possible way to address these broader problems may be through a host of more specific questions. How do Islamic “environmental” discourses and movements relate to the actual environmental policy-making “on the ground,” either globally or at specific locations and contexts? And what relationship do



they have to countries that identify as Islamic, including those that may be viewed as possessing a specific “environmental” agency (e.g., by their role in the global fossil fuels economy)? And if the actual scale and influence of “Islamic environmentalism” vary, by what factors, including the social, economic, political, and *environmental* (e.g., through the encounter of the societies and populations with specific ecological problems), is it conditioned? Admittedly, such questions are numerous and difficult, and not all of them can be expected to be comprehensively or unequivocally answered. Still, their mere consideration in the analysis should guide the research towards a more inclusive direction and help to create a more comprehensive picture of the whole phenomena.

### 1.1.2.c *Developing Theory*

Last but not least, to successfully address the phenomena of “Islam and the environment” and to realize the aims stated in the two previous areas, but also to resolve some of the marked discrepancies identified above, there is arguably still another thing needed: a theoretical reflection. In this regard, it can be said that two basic inclinations have already been determined. The first one prefers to view “Islamic environmentalism” as socially constructed, historically evolving, and context-dependent, and the second, to use a general characterization, as more bound by the “invariables” of religion, condensed in its scriptures and long-term ethical and moral postures (these can be approached with various levels of essentialization).

Arguably, it is the former attitude that has hitherto proved a more fertile ground for theory-building. A couple of theoretical prisms building on the “constructivist” notion, as applied in individual studies, have also been discussed. These can be generalized into two main underlying approaches. The first one is best represented by the study of Hancock (2018), who uses it systematically and treats “Islamic environmentalism” as a *social movement*, i.e., a goal-oriented effort to achieve social change. The second one, explicitly employed in turn by Schwencke (2012), prefers a looser category of *discourse* (even if the author debates particular movements as well), highlighting the versatility of “eco-Islam” and its ability to appear in multiple contexts. The application of these two

approaches, often in combination, also appears in most other similar works, usually dependent on the concrete nature of the research interest. In addition, a number of other, more narrow terms have been applied. These comprise the concept of “globalization of religion,” rendering the phenomena tied to the worldwide circulation of symbolic meanings (Schwencke 2012; Gade 2015; 2019; Smith 2017) or „environmentality,“<sup>10</sup> pointing out its role in establishing particular actors’ influence on individual agency in conformity of their own interest (Amri 2019; Gade 2019). All these approaches and prisms, most of which are, in fact, not mutually incompatible, are indisputably relevant, and they may serve as useful building blocks for further debate. In contrast, the attitude subscribing to the primordialist view has remained mostly theoretically sterile (i.e., bereft of any explicit theorization of the question), even if any theory of the phenomena should take it into account, too.

It is arguably from here that the most general and intricate theoretical question arises: How to interpret and capture the relationship between the temporal, varied, and heterogeneous (the enactment of the Islamic discourse in practice) on the one hand and the constant and universal (the canonical scriptures and the values derived from them) on the other? Concerning the debate on “Islam and the environment,” this question seems to be even more actual than in other cases, and this is because the conviction about the “pro-environmental” character of Islam based on scripture-derived tenets appears to be almost universally shared, cutting across all the different contexts, as well as the otherwise divisive cultural and doctrinal differences. What is the foundation of this agreement, existing in spite of the apparent heterogeneity and differences? This question will ultimately inform the theoretical reasoning in this work.

At the same time, it will be assumed that the way toward answering it leads not through the evaluation of abstract concepts but, at least in the first step, through making sense of how the notion of and the debate about “Islamic environmental values” is enacted. Therefore, the study of this historical and socially contingent process will comprise the bulk of the presented work, as it has been indicated above. In capturing, theoretically, this complex process, my analysis will not be substantially different from the frameworks that have been

---

<sup>10</sup> Known also as „eco-governmentality“ and comprising the application of the Foucauldian concept of governmentality on the sphere of environmental relations.

applied to the question in the extant literature, except in one significant regard: the attempt to achieve a greater systematization and consistency.

It is also for this reason that I will prioritize one particular category to conceptualize the subject and also demarcate its boundaries: that of *discourse*. From this framework, I will also derive a specific preliminary understanding of the whole studied subject: It will be assumed that “Islamic environmentalism” is best accessible as a circulation of texts, pronouncements, and statements (i.e., in either written or non-written form) in which “Islam” and the “environment” are connected in a particular way and the given meaning is conveyed. Obviously, this method may be perceived as objectionable by authors, who stress the salience of the lived experience and the actual practicing of Islamic environmentalism (see particularly Gade 2019; Finnegan 2011; Bagir and Martiam 2016; Bagir 2021). Nevertheless, I still hope to demonstrate its validity as a method that may provide novel and significant insights into the character of the phenomena.

In what follows, I will approach this circulation of texts as developing over time, creating quasi-stable structures and configurations, and interacting with the non-discursive domains of reality. This will also complement the historical and contextual orientation of the analysis and lead toward a host of other theoretical and empirical questions: how is the discourse conditioned or modulated by particular social settings, and how does it affect social reality? Why has it generated social movements in some contexts but none in others? How does its entanglement with various social processes influence the predominant shared understanding of the “environmental values” contained in the Islamic scriptures and modify the notions of ethics and morality that spring from it? The methodological and theoretical means to apprehend these multiple links will be further discussed in the next section (see 1.2) and supplemented by a few other theoretical concepts throughout the rest of the work. These will be primarily applied on pragmatic grounds to assist the resolution of specific questions at a particular point. In some cases, I will also add my own concepts and explanatory frameworks, namely that of *the virtual catechism* of Islamic environmentalism (see 2.2) and *moral response* to the ecological crisis (see 3.3).

Ideally, these theoretical reflections should aid the processing and assessment of the empirical material gathered and chronicled in what will be a

significant part of the presented research. It should also enhance the possibility of apprehending the “Islamic discourse on the environment” in its overall contours and in relation to other possible conceptualizations of the problem (including the primordialist conceptions of “values” and ethics) and as a distinct case of broader social phenomena and processes, like the interaction between Islamic discourses and various other contemporary social and political problems, or the interrelationship between environmentalism, culture, and religion on the more general plain.

#### 1.1.2.d *Summary: Research Questions and Aims of the Work*

Based on what has been said, the general aim of this work can be summarized as follows: to approach the general theme of the intersection between “Islam and the environment” through the study of the *Islamic discourse on the environment*. This is defined as a socially embedded practice of apprehending “the environment” or “nature” (and this typically in some specific configuration, like „the environment endangered by pollution,” ecological crisis, or like) through language, and specifically “from the Islamic perspective,” that is by invoking terms and concepts derived from Islam as a religious tradition, usually (even if not necessarily) from the perspective of a follower of the tradition, or the “believer.”

As a basic working hypothesis held throughout this work, based on the extant literature and preliminary assessment of the discourse, it will also be assumed that this discourse represents a more or less *contemporary* phenomenon, reaching back to the last half-century, essentially like (with only a few exceptions) other instances of the adaptation of environmentalist discourses. The question of whether this discourse can be traced further back into the older historical layers of the Islamic tradition will be mostly left fundamentally open, even if subjected to a brief discussion in conclusion. As such, the work will focus on the *modern* Islamic environmental discourse. In what follows, I will attempt to trace the genealogy of this discourse and map its various occurrences across multiple spatial and socio-cultural contexts. I will also focus on relationships to other social processes and institutions, typically mediated by social actors (i.e., the Muslim “environmentalists” themselves along with the recipients of their messages), and

the means of its dissemination and circulation. This may concern the universal social processes like globalization, migration, and the late modern transformation of the Islamic tradition, or more specific ones like the spread and development of the environmentalist discourse in distinct forms across various parts of the world and concrete trajectories of change in particular societies and communities, and even the non-societal ones like the late modern environmental change (again, occurring differently across varied spatial and geographical contexts).

The aim of this inquiry will be to make sense of what can be considered a peculiar, somewhat marginal, but nevertheless tangible and important element of “contemporary Islam.” Besides that, it will also, especially through the final theoretical discussion, attempt to contribute to the thinking about more general questions like that of the relationship between religion and environmentalism and, ultimately, nature and culture in general. Where possible, I will attempt to refer to the actual experiences and agency of concrete people, analyzed and interpreted with regard to the social and natural environments they inhabit, rather than to abstract categories and deductions. In doing so, I will draw on the valuable knowledge about the phenomena that has already been gathered by other authors, as well as the critical reading and re-reading of primary sources.

Finally, it is useful to mention what this work does not and cannot provide. First, it does not provide a definitive judgment on whether Islam is or is not a “pro-environmental” religion and whether the claims of Muslim environmentalists are “authentic.” This is because such a question, arguably, ultimately remains out of the purview of the social-scientific or any other scholarly investigation—ultimately, like all things tied to the spiritual experience and religious belief. Second, the presented work, although it can provide some hints, cannot give a *definitive* answer on whether “Islamic environmentalism” can and will positively contribute to the global struggle against our multiple shared environmental ills and problems. Arguably, this depends on numerous variables as well as different criteria for what such a contribution ought to consist of. Finally, even if this work aspires to provide, in terms of scope and detail, a *more* comprehensible survey of “Islam and the environment” than the others hitherto written, it cannot cover *all* its dimensions, as well as avoid necessary omissions and in some cases also misjudgments and misinterpretations. At least in part, these

will unavoidably arise from elaborating on a topic that is not only large in its scope and cuts across multiple spatial and temporal domains but is also interdisciplinary in its character. Hopefully, other authors will at some point amend the findings of this study or polemize with its conclusions. Now, after summarizing the aims of the work, I will discuss in detail the theoretical frameworks and methods that will be applied to answer the research questions.

## 1.2 Methodology and Theory

In the preceding section, I summarized the extant scholarly accounts of the theme and sketched out the fundamental aims of my inquiry. In this section, I will specify what may be regarded as the instruments to fulfill these aims—mainly in the form of methods and theories. Not least because of the complexity of the theme and its interdisciplinary nature, I will devote the first part of this section to the problem of *ontology*, that is, the exposition of the basic assumptions about the nature and character of the researched phenomena. Ideally, this part, which will draw on the concept of *assemblage* as one of the central terms, should make clear how both *Islam* and *the environment* will be understood and treated in what follows. In the second part, I will then proceed toward what can be conceived of as *epistemology*, that is, the actual methods and procedures grounded in extant disciplinary traditions that will be followed in addressing the phenomena as a subject of inquiry and analysis. In that, I will first appeal to the universal tenets of interdisciplinarity and methodological pluralism (which seem to be, in the case of this research area, even more important than in the others) and then further specify my approach by the two disciplinary traditions of historical sociology and environmental history.

### 1.2.1 Ontology: Conceiving of the World in General and Islam and the Environment in Particular

No later than in the 1970s (the time which, incidentally or not, correlates with the consolidation of the broad stream of environmentalist thinking), the practice of construing major theories and relating grand narratives in social sciences and humanities got into retreat, particularly under the weight of the so-called “postmodern turn” (represented by the works of M. Foucault, J. Derrida, and J. F. Lyotard and a number of other thinkers). It has been shown that such theories are themselves discursive and thereby „relative“ and incapable of providing a solid anchor for giving definitive answers about many aspects of our

human world. However, this does not mean that how we view this world would not matter. Even despite the proclaimed retreat of grand schemes, any scholarly work is based on certain theoretical and philosophical commitments and assumptions. These concern, on the one hand, what is the nature or the reality of the researched phenomena (be it “society,” “nature,” “history,” etc.) and, on the other hand, how is such reality approachable and accessible to our knowledge. Simultaneously, it can be said that the latter is usually conditioned by the former, typically referred to as *social ontology* (see also Sarkia and Kaidesoja 2023). Ontological commitments and assumptions are sometimes a subject of debate within a scholarly work and sometimes not. Whereas the latter is usually the case in a situation wherein the researcher approaches his subject within an already established tradition of its treatment (typically functioning as a particular field or even discipline), in which such questions have been already in some way resolved, the former comes out in a situation of a lack of such clarity (or alternatively a need of redefinition). In the case of the presented topic, such debate is desirable as it has been shown to contain many questions and uncertainties. As with anyone else’s, my work will draw on particular ontological commitments. Instead of leaving them in the dark, I will now elaborate on them and make them explicit.

The ontology I will employ and also partly utilize as a general theoretical framework is inspired by the line of thinking about both social and material reality developed from the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987). More specifically, I will draw on one of the adaptations of this thinking, and arguably its more transparent and operationalized elaboration, by Manuel DeLanda, which is defined by the author as the *theory of assemblage* (see DeLanda 2006; 2016).

The ontology, proposed by DeLanda based on Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy, can be defined as realist (i.e., assuming the independent existence of the outer world), materialist, but also anti-reductionist in its dealing with the plurality and heterogeneity of the constituents of both the social and natural world. It specifically focuses on the problem of the relationship between the social micro-structures (like the individual or a tightly-knit community of people sharing common beliefs) and macro-structures (like states, religious traditions, or discourses) that seems to be exceptionally relevant for the study of phenomena



that spans from the individual and local to the universal and global. I will now introduce this ontology through its application to the problem that should inform the inquiry presented in this work from its outset: how to ontologically conceive the two main subjects and entities of “Islam” and “the environment” and the relationship between them?

### 1.2.1.a *The Theory of Assemblages*

If we turn back to the extant studies on “Islam and the environment,” we may observe that in dealing with the notion of Islam and Islamic tradition, researchers (even though the issue is scarcely discussed in earnest) adopt some implicit assumptions about it. For the first group of authors (represented mainly by the “primordialist” approach), Islam tends to be viewed as a unified tradition that harbors specific given values. For the second one (represented, even if not unequivocally, by the other two approaches), Islam comprises rather the common label for a plurality of individual actors bound together by some shared beliefs but differing in others. As for the latter, the reasoning then goes that these actors may be inspired by “environmental values,” adapting them to the religious terminology of Islam and establishing an environmental movement operating under its banner. This split is evident even in the methods used to study the subject. Whereas the authors inclined towards the first ontology rely primarily on the study of texts, seeking in them the “meaning” of the tradition as a whole, the second approach relies instead on the study of concrete individuals (treated either as a selection of concrete persons interrogated in detail within the qualitative approach or as a sampled population within the quantitative approach). While there is a general understanding that there is a relationship between the two (the texts forming the “essence” of the tradition and the postures of individuals relating to these texts), the relationship remains somewhat murky and is not—as it has been shown—appropriately addressed in the current debate. Obviously, these contrasting approaches mirror the long-term methodological conundrum in sociology, and that is appropriately conceptualizing the relationship between individuals and social wholes.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> The two most influential pioneers of modern sociology, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, solved this problem in notably different ways: while the latter focused on „social facts“ as the

For conceptualizing this relationship, the already mentioned *assemblage theory* may present one of the solutions, with its main advantage being that it, as much as possible, tries to avoid the prioritization of the one explanatory level on account of the other (usually known as reductionism). The concept of *assemblage* (fr. *agencement*) has been popularized in philosophical discourse by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987), pointing towards the notion of multiplicity as a primary ontological category—one which remains fundamentally unbound by a higher totality. The *assemblage theory* originates in Manuel DeLanda’s elaboration of Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of *assemblage*, condensed and operationalized to better suit its utilization in studying concrete social phenomena. DeLanda, in accordance with Deleuze and Guattari, defines *assemblage* as a *social whole constituted by extrinsic relations between its parts*. As such, social assemblages exist and possess agency alongside agents in a more narrow sense as individual human beings. DeLanda devises this concept to find a middle way between two tendencies of reductionism which, on the one hand, include only human beings as agents (micro-reductionism) or, on the other hand, views the social wholes (i.e., the state, class, market, or even society, as a whole) as causally determining the characteristics of its constituent parts (i.e., macro-reductionism) (DeLanda 2016, 9). To avoid these two tendencies, which distort our view of social reality, DeLanda suggests that “we need to conceive of emergent wholes in which the parts retain their autonomy so that they can be detached from one whole and plugged into another one, entering into new interactions.” (DeLanda 2016, 10). *Assemblages* present such emergent wholes and are characterized as follows:

1. The assemblages possess emergent properties: an elementary example is a social network or a community that enforces given social norms by punitive functions; a more complex one is a university or factory that possesses an authority structure and distributes rights and obligations among its members or workers. This enables such an institution (assemblage) to perform tasks unattainable by a single individual. Yet significantly, the emergent properties are not *necessary* or *transcendent* (they do not form an *essence* of the whole) but are continuously produced by the interactions between the constituent parts of the

---

external determinant of individual agency (e.g., the shared system of values and beliefs; cf. Durkheim 1995) in a functionalist manner (cf. Douglas 1986), the former built his theory around different types of individual „social action“ that remains itself largely unexplained (cf. Weber 1978).

given whole, i.e., *contingent* upon this interaction. An institution (e.g., a university) may thus cease to perform its functions if its members cease to obey the established authority structure or like (DeLanda 2016, 10–13).

2. The assemblages are “nested” to each other. Thus, an institution like a university or state is comprised of assemblages of lesser scale—departments, faculties, bureaucratic agencies etc. (DeLanda 2016, 16–20); a particularly apt example of such “nestedness” is an army comprising of divisions, battalions, platoons and still more “micro” level entities like an assemblage of a soldier and his rifle or radio transmitter (cf. 70–72).

3. The assemblages, at whichever level, are “historically individuated entities.” As DeLanda stresses, this individuality, or historical uniqueness, is common to all entities, from individuals to species, which thus occupy the same ontological plane (13) to the point that there is no categorical difference between individual and, say, state (the “individual” is assembled from its constituent parts as well—see the previous example of a soldier).

The two latter tenets, in particular, have significant consequences for conceiving the social reality. This reality—a view inspired by Fernand Braudel—is thus comprised of “sets of sets” related to one another as parts to wholes and possessing both autonomy and individual history. DeLanda uses this conception, among other things, to discard what he deems to be a widespread practice of thinking along “reified generalities” like *the Market*, *the State*, or *the Capitalist Mode of Production* that distort and obscure how macro-entities (like a *particular* state, larger-scale national markets which begun to emerge only in the 19th century, or different forms of capitalism that operate in particular national and local contexts) depend by their constitution on their constituent components, change in time, and may display unexpected properties (not least those that contravene their explanation derived from their treatment as “reified generalities”; DeLanda 2016, 13–17).

4. Lastly, even though *assemblage* is a universal concept that applies to any social (and even biological or material; see below) entity, DeLanda acknowledges that particular assemblages may differ from each other by the mode of their structure and functioning. This concerns mainly the difference between (if exemplified in the realm of the social) “tightly knit” communities or institutions

governed by strict relations of authority (e.g., the narrow family or a governmental agency) and more loose social wholes in the form of more temporary and volatile “alliances” (e.g., the subscribers of a random channel on a social network, or a group of demonstrators demanding the resignation of a government official). Deleuze and Guattari distinguish in this regard between *assemblages* and *strata*, with the former being unstable, “nomadic,” and “rhizomatic” in their functioning, whereas the latter being settled, structured, “imperial” and “tree-like” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 39–74). DeLanda, accepting the basic logic of this distinction, still proposes to refine it, and that is by treating the original dichotomy as “*qualitatively different phases of one and the same entity*” (DeLanda 2016, 6) that are determined by *parameters*. These parameters are two. They comprise, on the one hand, the degree of *territorialization*, which can be defined as the degree “to which an assemblage’s component parts are drawn from a homogeneous repertoire or the degree to which an assemblage homogenizes its own components” (territorialization also is, though not unequivocally, correlated to territorial integrity and compactness; see DeLanda 2016, 22). The other parameter is then the degree of *coding*, i.e., how strictly the relationships between the parts of the whole are regulated—often through written texts like authoritative decrees, rules, procedures, constitutions etc. The measure of both territorialization and coding may change, and thus, *strata* and *assemblages* are transformable to each other, *or rather*, as it has been said, constitute only different phases. An example stated by DeLanda illustrates how such a transformation may occur at a relatively quick pace:

when two or more communities engage in ethnic or religious conflict, not only will the geographical boundaries of their neighbourhoods or small towns be policed more intensely, so will the behaviour of their members. The distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ will sharpen and any small deviation from local norms will be noticed and punished [...] Conflict, in other words, tends to increase the degree of territorialisation of communities, a fact that may be captured conceptually by a change in the setting of the parameter (DeLanda 2016, 22)<sup>12</sup>

---

12 An opposite example of *detrterritorialization* put forth by DeLanda is that of an ordinary conversation among people disturbed by an unexpected intrusion by a stranger (cf. DeLanda 2016, 29).

Having explained the basic contours of this ontology, we may now apply it to Islam, which can be approached equally as well as an *assemblage of assemblages* to which all the above-mentioned characteristics apply.

### 1.2.1.b *Islam as an Assemblage*

In the above-specified sense, we may start by the consideration of the origins of the religious tradition. We may conceive of the early community of Muslims as an assemblage defined by the adherence to the religious message brought by Muhammad—one which emerged newly and ran against the extant (i.e., tribal, communal, extant religious) loyalties. It is debatable whether we can conceive of the early community of Muslims as a *stratum*, yet it may be a compelling idea: the community eventually formed not only a religious but also a political union that was, especially once confronted with its enemies, tightly knit by the loyalty to Muhammad’s person and zeal for the revealed religious message (without this loyalty and passion, the new creed could hardly establish itself). Some facts, though, also support a different outlook. Early Islamic history is abundant with stories of apostasy and revolt, and there were doctrinal differences that surfaced probably as early as with the death of the Prophet (if not earlier). The Islamic conquest of Arabia, the Mediterranean, and Central Asia was hardly fully coordinated and had a peculiar “nomadic” character. Overall, already throughout the times of the “ancestors” (*salaf*), the religious landscape seems to have been diverse and unruly, and what seems obvious, over time, Islam moved still more towards the shape of a *detrterritorialized* assemblage: geographically vastly spread, comprising diverse local communities and emerging cultures, with only a temporary and incomplete “imperial” unification by the caliphates of the first four caliphs, the Umayyads, and the ‘Abbasids.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, as detrterritorialized as this assemblage of a historical religion born at a concrete time and place may have become, it always kept and still maintains a certain *elementary unity*. A literal example of such elementary *territorialization* may be that all practicing followers of the faith turn towards

---

<sup>13</sup> Regarding the doctrinal plurality in early Islamic history, see, e.g., the study of Haider (2011). The ambiguous relationship between territoriality and territorialization in Islam corresponds to Deleuze and Guattari’s assessment of monotheism as such, cf. 1987, 382–384.

Mekka during salat, and many of them do so in an expectation that they could one day perform hajj therein if they have yet not done so (needless to say, hajj has had a tangible impact on maintaining the cultural unity among Muslims throughout the history through the means of cultural exchange; this unity then appears to be bigger than in Christianity). Islam has also been tied together by a distinct *coding* contained in texts, the most important of which is the Qur'an. The validity and bindingness of this code are implied by the creed, as Islam is most generally and loosely defined as a belief in the Qur'an as *al-furqān* (the 'criterion' or distinction of good and evil) and *al-hudā* (the 'guiding' for human life). And the Qur'an codes also other important categories like *kāfir*, or *umma* (which, as Toshihiko Izutsu demonstrates, are, among other things, language-specific; cf. Izutsu 2002, 12–15) that convey and sustain the sense of communal unity. The Qur'anic code is, though, not exhaustive. Therefore, it is supplemented by other texts like hadith, *tafsīr*, or *fiqh* literature. These texts usually particularize (but may also decode or overcode; cf. DeLanda 2016, 23) the Qur'anic code. But significantly, they are simultaneously deficient in the universality of their bindingness. Significant doctrinal differences arise regarding the status and validity of these texts. Some of these differences may hold long-term stability and recall fundamental differences and "primordial" origins, up to the point that they comprise split into two or more sedimented assemblages within the larger community of Islam (like the division between Sunnis and Shi'is and all other divisions of a similar kind). Still, others may arise on a more temporally limited plane and concern only the area of "interpretation" (like the disputes between the Shi'i *mujtahids*, institutionalized as an "ordinary" element of doctrinal identification in the Twelver Shi'a or even differences between individual authorities and authors in any area of intellectual activity within religion). As it may be noticed, the differences in "interpretation" among individual authors occur, too, through texts, i.e., "codes" that are copied or disseminated by modern means. A "sect," "school" (*madhhab*), Sufi *ṭarīqa* or a modern-type institution like *jamā'a* or *ḥizb*, all typically coalesce around particular texts like oral traditions, treatises, or manifestos (even if these may also combine with the "charismatic" role of a leader), and they are therefore not fundamentally different from each other. These texts also usually establish and sanction an *authority* which may be both textual and personal (e.g., the Shi'i

principle of *ʿiṣma* vs. Sunni *jamāʿa* and *ijmāʿ* and the corresponding differences in the body of *ḥadīth* literature; cf. Heern 2015, 13–18). Obviously, the principle of nested assemblages applies here as one may distinguish among ,sects‘ or ,schools‘ within *Ithnāʿasharīʿa* etc.

In this way, the various and mutually overlapping regimes of territorialization and coding can be shown to account for what is also otherwise ascertained as an apparent fact: the fundamental heterogeneity of Islam but also its simultaneous capacity to retain the characteristic of a social whole. Now, to this schematic picture, the dimension of *temporality* may be added.

In a particular situation or historical period, there may be a tendency for *less* coding, decoding, or de-territorialization of the tradition. This may occur in a couple of ways: through the growing physical distance among individual communities, through the demise of a shared doctrinal or charismatic authority, and, finally, through the encounter with a variety of heterogeneous cultural, social, and political influences and relations conveyed by other social *assemblages* (like states, other religious traditions, economic, cultural or scientific networks etc.). During the history of Islam, such deterritorializations have been occurring continuously, and therefore, we may also distinguish (except for the strictly doctrinal divides like that between Sunna and Shiʿa) between almost an endless plurality of local cultures in Islam (Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, Balkans, Middle East, Turkey; but also Qom and Teheran, Casablanca and Marrakesh, Paris and London etc.). This is also the apparent rationale for Marshall Hodgson to introduce the concepts of “Islamicate” and “Islamdom” as pointing towards “the overall society and culture associated historically with the religion” (Hodgson 1974, 56; see also *ibid.* 56–60), i.e., pointing towards a larger *assemblage* embracing also other cultural and material elements.

Arguably, during the modern age, the trend towards the deterritorialization of religion has been particularly strong in certain areas, challenging the extant forms of coding and established hierarchies. As a chief factor of this change must be seen the changing character of the exercise of state power, which from the 19th century began to follow patterns in the Muslim World developed somewhat earlier in Europe—i.e., more extensive centralization,

unification, and homogenization within the regime of the nation-state. With this process (whether through direct colonial incursion or as part of the “defensive modernization,” e.g., in the post-1839 Ottoman Empire or interwar Turkey and Iran), the regulatory role of religious norms was weakened or abolished in areas that were of concern to states, most significantly, in the legal domain. Thus, religion, or more precisely, the religious dignitaries around which local communities coalesced as possessors of binding legal power (derived from the shared “codes” of religion), lost part of their authority over their “subjects.” The authority to resolve disputes, punish, and determine laws passed to states, claiming in the manner of the European states their “sovereignty” (see March 2013). They were, in fact, these states, which became now more *territorialized*. This was accompanied by other processes, such as the cultural change related to increased spatial mobility of people, ideas, pictures, and commodities. Throughout this process, it may be argued, the effective bindingness of particular religious injunctions—and thereby also their ability to *code* an individual human life—was in many cases abolished; a space was given to other *codes* to structure human life as well as to *interpret* the actual meaning of being Muslim more freely. Arguably, this *deterritorialization* went furthest among—now numerous—migrant and diasporic communities in non-Muslim countries. Through these processes, Islam may have become (and this is, of course, only in specific cases) more “flexible” and more akin to the liberal ideal of a “personal faith,” a matter of choice and possibility (cf. Taylor 2007, 1–14), preferably expressed in a private sphere, open to a combination with and inclusive of other kinds of identities (like that of a citizen, feminist or environmentalist). I will later discuss this deterritorialization as one of the important contexts of the adaptation of environmentalist tenets by Muslim actors.

To make the picture representative, it is, however, necessary to see that at the same time also, an opposite trend emerged. Some religious communities and assemblages of scholars opposed the loosening of the coding function of the religious tradition and reacted by demanding enhancement of coding and even *more* coding. This concerns, above all, the *literalist* interpretations of the Qur’an and sunna by the “fundamentalists” and many of those identified in the West as “Islamists.” They, as a common denominator of their varied approaches, typically



refuted figurative or limited reading of the religious tradition and demanded its full bindingness as well as most, if not all, of the historically evolved injunctions to continue their effect. As a part of their effort to *re-territorialize* Islam, they also emphasized the unique markers of identity and, in more radical strands, preached the logic of *exclusion* and seclusion (like the Salafist doctrine of *al-walā' wa-l-barā'*; see Ťupek 2015, 117–118), pondered upon the possibility of re-unite the *umma* politically in one Islamic state or caliphate, and in some cases initiated violent actions to upend and deterritorialize the perceived ungodly order, so as to create the space for their own utopia.

Now, in expounding this ontology and applying it to Islamic history, I do not, by and large, intend to propose a novel “theory” of Islam (even if I may sometimes cling to some related theoretical insights). The main point of it is to make more evident what is often ultimately well understood but less often rigorously kept as a methodological tenet: what we call “Islam” comprises a loose *assemblage* of heterogenous components, and still lesser “nested” assemblages, equally as heterogeneous. These may be more coded (territorialized) or become less coded (deterritorialized), substantially changing what we identify with the term “religion” itself. At the same time, Islam, as well as what constitutes it as a social whole, overlap, enter relationships, borrow from, and clash with other assemblages (like states, tribal alliances, or revolutionary movements) and cannot be meaningfully analyzed without regard for this indeterminacy and blurred margins. Islam (like, for that matter, other religions) can be compared to a language from this perspective. As Deleuze and Guattari state, “there is no language in itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialects, patois, slangs, and specialized languages. There is no ideal speaker-listener, any more than there is a homogeneous linguistic community. Language is, in Weinreich's words, ‘an essentially heterogeneous reality’” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 7). The same can be, according to the view embraced in this work, said about Islam; even though some groups may raise claims to possess the religious message and subject it to an “imperial” vision of unity, homogeneity, and hierarchy, perhaps similarly to great lexicographers and grammarians as well as the state language departments interested in sustaining the “purity” of national languages (cf. DeLanda 2016, 57–60). After all, this heterogeneity also has

become a point of critique pitted against the „imperial vision“ of Islamic environmentalism by some authors (see, e.g., Bagir and Martiam 2016, 83–86; Finnegan 2011).

At the same time, treating Islam fundamentally as a multiplicity does not—and must not—mean abandoning and disregarding the instances in which it expresses itself and can thus indeed be analyzed as a whole and limiting the inquiry just to individual authors or communities (a way of a ‚micro-reductionism‘). Islam still comprises social wholes of considerable proportions, interpretative traditions, and trans-territorial social networks—and perhaps constitutes also a major whole of its own (how tangible and agency-capable such a whole is debatable). As has already been mentioned, this fact returns to the existence of particular codes, especially in the form of texts. This makes language and the study of texts particularly relevant for the study of Islam and makes the above-expounded ontology of assemblages propense to a combination with the focus on *discourse*—that can be seen as the medium of the crucial capacity of coding.

In its most essential meaning, discourse means simply a sequence of language signs—and in some sense, it always remains as such. Yet characteristically, these signs and segments of speech coalesce into wholes and patterns—in other words, they also constitute *assemblages* (i.e., a particular phrase, a particular injunction, definition, explanation or justification, a certain text which becomes canonized, or a certain segment of text which becomes frequently quoted, an expression which is attributed with distinct role meaning and gains widespread currency; see also DeLanda 2016, 51–67). This aptitude of language to gain a function of a whole, to establish a particular way of coding, and thereby also of “thinking” and naming and conceiving of “facts” has been most famously elaborated by Michel Foucault and must be seen as the chief principle of his genealogical analysis of discourse and “archeology” of knowledge (see 2002a; 2002b; see also, e.g., 1991; 2008). Not least because the discourse on „Islam and the environment“ will be the central subject of the study and because, as it has been stressed, it is through the discursive practices through which the authority and coherence of the religious tradition is established and maintained, I will strongly draw on this approach, to which I will also yet return theoretically.

What is significant to stress here is that as the assemblage of Islam is not isolated, neither is the religious discourse. In all four thematic chapters of this study, I will stress and document the principal incomprehensibility of the Islamic discourse on the environment without considering its close relationship with the more general and universal discourses of environmentalism. At the same time, I will resist the tendency to reduce the former to the latter and render it its mere epiphenomena or an “emulation” or at least do so a priori without documenting this dependence on individual instances. A part of my work will be to show it must be treated in its own terms—and part of this treatment is also a serious reading of the tradition, including the Qur’anic text as the most authoritative and universal one.

What are the general methodological tenets deriving from this approach to reality—its ontology? It is in the first place to consider with an appropriate measure of suspicion all abstract entities or generalized wholes like “Islam” or “Islamic view” on the empirical plane. Indeed, any of such wholes can be approached only through the study of particulars—authors, pieces of literature, communities, and discourses. Only in this way can the relations within the assemblage that we call Islam become more and not less transparent. Before assessing how Islam confronts the “environment“ or „environmentalism,“ it must be thus mapped and documented how individual actors or their networks encounter particular environments and environmentalist discourses and establish either discursive or non-discursive assemblages between both. Only in this way the danger of either „undermining“ or „overmining“ (cf. Harman 2014) “Islam and the environment“ as an object of study can be avoided—in the sense in which undermining it means viewing it as a mere ephemeral discursive epiphenomena of globalism, lacking real substance, and overmining it means identifying it unproblematically with the purported „essence“ of the Islamic code. Having hopefully exemplified the ontology of assemblages in an elementary way by its application to Islam as the theme of inquiry, it is useful to briefly focus on the second component of the couple that will permeate the following pages of this work.

### 1.2.1.c *The Environment*

The conceptualization through the terms of assemblage and discourse enables us well to objectify the actual process through which (a group of) Muslim authors adopted some of the propositions of the environmentalists (or certain groups of them) and incorporated them into their religious outlook so as to define a specific Islamic stance (in fact a number of stances) towards what we call “environmental questions” and else. Yet, as one may notice, a significant component seems still to be lacking in this account: the environment in its physical or material sense. In fact, if we overlook the extant literature on “Islam and environment,” this component is—paradoxically—very much absent from it, too (appearing at most in practices described by the ethnographic accounts).

But what do I mean by that the environment is “absent”? Is it not so that all of these texts are about the environment—about environmental problems and the wholesale environmental crisis that the Muslim authors try to tackle in their texts? This problem returns to the fact that the environment as a language signifier—this text, as a matter of course, being no exception—can be represented and discursively framed in multiple ways. And in its treatment, it can easily become a rather abstract or „empty“ signifier. This, arguably, is the case more often than we would like to admit, concerning especially and precisely the situation when the theme is discussed in the social realm. Within it, the „environment“ or even the „environmental problems“ can easily become mere „reified generalities“ (see above; DeLanda 2016, 13–17) made bereft of their inner multiplicity and heterogeneity, which can be mediated only through its focused reflection. This is partly understandable, as anyone dealing with the problems of society, morality, or politics may not be inclined to plunge into the issues perceived to be reserved for specialists, in this case, from the realm of natural and environmental sciences. Unfortunately, such seclusion seems to disregard the basic message of the whole of ecological thinking: that is, the environment must always be reflected and cannot be meaningfully separated from the realm of the social.

In incorporating the environment into the presented ontology, it is possible to begin again with the materialist ontology of Deleuze, Guattari, and DeLanda. In fact, this can be shown to have a particular advantage: it mostly

presupposes that *environment and nature simply are here* and interact with society, and it takes it into account, even if it does not thematize it explicitly. This is because this ontology is, to a large degree, implicitly interested in and based on *ecological* relations (cf. DeLanda 2016, 3); to appreciate this fact, it is sufficient to realize that the central concept of *assemblage* as devised by the authors is not limited to social or societal wholes but also includes material components. Deleuze and Guattari's famous horse archer example can help us elucidate this aspect.

Comprising a historical innovation in the technology of war, the introduction of cavalry archery enabled the nomads of the steppe, from Scythians to Mongols, to overrun great sedentary empires in what the authors conceptualize as a *nomadic war machine*. As both authors repeatedly stress, as a military technology, the mounted archery is visible and comprehensible only as the man-horse-bow assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 404), which, as one may notice, comprises the three distinct components of different nature, i.e., “the personal, the biological and the technological” (DeLanda 2016, 68). It is only through the confluence of the material (bow, which is also an *assemblage* of an arc, string, and projectile, the horse with conditions required for its domestication and breeding, saddle, stirrup, broader technology of metallurgy, the steppe where the nomadic way of life is possible and so on; cf. Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 404–410; DeLanda 2016, 4) and social (the deployment of man-horse-bow in combat, its *assemblage* into units and squadrons, martial art related to this deployment, specific nomadic tactics and social organization) through which an effective nomadic war machine comes into being. This perspective reveals how social assemblages and processes are inevitably entangled with material objects or—much more precisely—how there are, in fact, no “purely” social assemblages but always “hybrid” ones (this “hybridity” and functional connection between heterogeneous parts is inherent in the concept itself) in a way which is by no means limited to nomadic armies. As DeLanda proposes:

To properly apply the concept of assemblage to real cases we need to include, in addition to persons, the material and symbolic artifacts that compose communities and organisations: the architecture of the buildings that house them; the myriad different tools and machines used in offices, factories, and kitchens; the various sources of food, water, and electricity; the many symbols and icons with which they

express their identity. (DeLanda 2016, 20).

In this sense, Islam is not only an assemblage of believers and worshippers, of texts and interpretative traditions, but also of material things and *objects*. There is Kaaba, located in the city of Mecca in the south-west of the Arabian Peninsula—a city in which many other objects and places of religious significance are located, like the water of Zamzam spring, the hill of ‘Arafat, the Great Mosque of Mecca and so on. Similar places and structures are also located elsewhere. Particular technologies (like writing or tiling and, more recently, the printing press, social networks, YouTube videos, and reinforced concrete) have played an essential role in the history of religion. Doctrinal feuds have historically arisen about the religious status and role of such objects and technologies. In fact, the imagery of assemblage can go much further: for example, jet airliners, too, can nowadays be counted as a part of the *assemblage of Islam* as far as they comprise a necessary means for Muslims from various parts of the world to perform the hajj (and so on). Such a view of Islam may look surprising. In fact, it has long been neglected, perhaps not very differently from other domains and from the social philosophy and ontology in the West itself, which (perhaps with the partial exception of Marxism) relegated such “superficialities” into the category of “obvious” preconditions of “higher” intellectual and cultural activity. The recent studies of “material religion” (which have also included environmental aspects; see Gade 2012), though, show the viability of including material objects in the analysis of religion and even its ability to throw new light on some long-term conceptual controversies (e.g., between the “orthodox” or “elite” religion and the “popular” one; see Plate 2015).

The study of the entanglement of religious life and practice within the material realm also presents a clear incentive for how to reflect on its environmental dimension. Nevertheless, this simultaneously raises an important and by no means simple question: what exactly does the “environment” stand for? Even though the term is used every day, various critiques have been raised regarding its content and validity. In fact, its very encompassingness may lead to a suspicion that we deal here with yet another “reified generality.”

In its plainest, the “environment” is, first and foremost, a relational term pointing toward the surroundings of something. By speaking about the

environment in the context of ecology, we usually mean the “natural environment”—a concept established in opposition to the “artificial” or “built” environment. Hence, the closeness to the concept of “nature” as opposed to “civilization” and like. In this sense, the “environment” ultimately encompasses the whole Earth (and potentially beyond). Since it is physical and natural, it also has a special epistemological relationship to a distinct branch of knowledge, that of *natural sciences* (physics, geology, biology, climatology, and like). Indeed, it has been through the observations of naturalists and natural scientists that the phenomena of the interrelatedness of all organisms came to realization and systematic study within the field of *ecology* (a term introduced by Ernst Haeckel in 1866; see Bowler 1992, 361–378) and it was to a large degree by the influence of ecologists (as the popular usage of the term up to this day attests to—even if the matter is more intricate; see below) that the questions of the environment were rendered universally important (see Krebs 2008, 2–4). This close relationship with the scientific worldview and with the long-term accumulation of knowledge, which transformed the experience of the Earth from a “frightening mystery” beyond one’s own living perimeter to its current notion as an ultimately knowable and measurable “Earth system” (see Perry and MacCracken 2002, 1–2), must be clearly taken in consideration. As it will be shown, the question of science, its validity, and its relationship to the Islamic revelation reappears in the Islamic discourse on the environment and has an unnegligible role in it. And from this scientific perspective, the question of environment can also be easily seen as largely resolved as far as the content and character of the “environment” may be left to natural sciences to be determined and subsequently worked with in the area of social sciences, humanities, and even theology.

Nonetheless, such a view, for a couple of reasons, proves to be problematic. The above-mentioned perspective (a kind of “environmental realism”; cf. Macnaghten and Urry 1998, 1) in which “nature” and “environment” present an epistemologically neutral entity knowable by exact scientific methods and separated from the “social” and interpretative realm is not fully sustainable. In the first place, it assumes that the scientific knowledge itself is neutral and “objective” and that it provides clear-cut answers. But this is obviously not the case as the philosophy of science has taught us in many different ways (see, e.g.,

Kuhn 1996; specifically in relation to environmental themes see e.g., the controversy around the concept of Gaia [cf. Spowers 2002, 305–306]). Second, it assumes that “natural” is clearly and easily separable from “social” or “artificial.” This presupposition is, though, also problematic, mainly because it is particularly hard to establish what is “artificial” or “unnatural” (as even gene editing or virtual reality gadget have their “natural” origin). As it has been shown, the opposition of *society-nature* or *civilization-environment* is inevitably discursively ordered too and has its own distinct cultural origins (cf. Williams 1972; Williams 1973), and as Timothy Morton has vividly demonstrated, the concept of nature itself is loaded with a profound philosophical ambiguity, and its current notion derives mostly from romantic tradition (Morton 2009).

On this basis, Macnaghten and Urry also refuse not only the above-mentioned model that can be defined as “environmental realism” but also that of the “environmental idealism” (attempting to specify consistent values to be held by humans about nature) and “environmental instrumentalism” (attempting to determine a unified human interest in relation to nature and implement it in practice) but instead focus on the study of

specific social practices, especially of people's dwellings, which produce, reproduce and transform different natures and different values. It is through such practices that people respond, cognitively, aesthetically and hermeneutically, to what have been constructed as the signs and characteristics of nature. Such social practices embody their own forms of knowledge and understanding and undermine a simple demarcation between objective science and lay knowledge. These practices structure the responses of people to what is deemed to be the 'natural'. (Macnaghten and Urry 1998, 1–2)

As it may be observed, this approach, paying attention to „flows within and across national boundaries of signs, images, information, money, people, as well as noxious substances“ within which these practices occur, being discursively ordered, embodied, spaced and timed (ibid.), in fact, complements the claim about that there is no purely „social“ through adding that there is no purely „natural“ either. In this situation, it seems that all we are left with is again more or less an *assemblage of assemblages* involving a variety of agents and objects intermingled together with blurred and sometimes hardly definable boundaries. In this sense, I



may also generalize the ontology on which this thesis is based and which I find fit to approach the problem of the environmental dimension of Islam.

Through the prism of this ontology, we may view Islam as a large (in fact global) decentralized and deterritorialized assemblage—an assemblage consisting of many “nested” components from local and municipal to national, regional, and transnational. This assemblage is coded at its various levels by different (mainly, even if not only) texts spanning from the Qur’an and hadith to school textbooks sanctioned by states, literary works of influential sheykhs, imams, and mujtahids or widely shared YouTube videos of charismatic preachers. Importantly, this assemblage constitutes an entity that is individuated (there is no preordained and definitive “substance” of Islam even on the level of its identification with the phenomena of “religion”) and historical (the actual shape of Islam is a product of the historical development which will further continue). The assemblage of Islam exists in an “environmental context.” By this, it is simply meant that throughout history, Islam always existed and interacted with what we identify and class as the “natural environment”—which, however, is by itself only an *assemblage* of local and regional ecosystems, a “set of sets” involving biota and abiotic components which—significantly—from the time preceding the birth of Islam at least by millennia interact (and form assemblages) with the human culture and technology.

The contemporary “Islamic environmentalism” may then be viewed as a part of this “set of sets”: an individual interpretative tradition that presumably has its own history. It is guided and coded by a set of discursive practices—circulation of texts and exchange of information among actors. It may be more or less territorialized or almost completely deterritorialized, comprising a variety of individual or local traditions. This also means that to be fully understood, Islamic environmentalism must be itself analyzed “environmentally” with regard to the (natural) environment in its physical sense (this becomes evident as soon as we realize that only someone surrounded by a degraded environment can meaningfully think about the phenomena of its degradation). And, again, this environment cannot be viewed (and is not experienced) by Muslim environmentalists (and still all Muslims) as one whole (a “reified generality”). We all are surrounded by its various planes or “circles”—the immediate and probably urban environment, the local or regional environments in our broader

vicinity, which may suffer from various specific problems about which we perhaps read in local news or which we experience as a locally or nationally debated issue, and finally by the global environment comprising of earth systems within which processes like the change of the composition of the atmosphere and the related climatic change may occur. And this also again exemplifies the inextricability of the *social environments* from the natural ones in both of which the “Islamic environmentalism” is set and which are equally as important.

The majority of knowledge about the disturbances caused by the human agency in local or global ecosystems in the modern era is, as it has already been mentioned, produced (in the form of data, statistics, their interpretation etc.) by the modern and largely natural sciences.<sup>14</sup> It is the way this knowledge is further discursively processed, filtered, and interpreted, generating the eventual picture that any individual, including the highly specialized natural scientists themselves, holds about the “state of the environment” in either concrete or general cases. As it will be discussed further, a significant part of this “processing” usually occurs outside the purview of natural sciences themselves but in the domains of politics, economy, law, media, and, more generally, public discourse, which relates to the *environmentalism* as a global movement and another vast and loose assemblage which may be even compared to religion if sufficient imagination is deployed. These combine with the historical settings of Muslim authors and activists within the assemblage of the Islamic religion, comprising actors, communities, interpretative traditions, sects, and material artifacts engaging practices of identification that establish a historical continuity.

If my assessment is correct, “Islamic environmentalism,” which in its proper sense emerged in the 1960s, occurs in a specific environment of what can be defined as *modernizing, deterritorialized Islam*. This is even though Islam existed in the environmental context before. But this context could have hardly been approached directly and explicitly. In other words, the environment, except in exceptional cases, did not pose a problem of comparable scale in past epochs—and this, of course, holds for any historical human culture, creed, or philosophy. This means that Islam, as a tradition, may now be seen in the *process* of its encounter with the environment as an explicit subject of knowledge and

---

<sup>14</sup> And that is if we allow for „sciences“ as acceptable generalization; in any case, we can hardly speak about Science possessing a definite or objective account.

understanding. Given our interconnected terrestrial culture's current condition and trajectory, this encounter is posed to continue.

In this way, the ontological commitments have been expounded and perhaps also added to the clarity of the definition of the researched problem. If the aim of this work is to be fulfilled, the map of the ontological landscape in which „Islam“ and „the environment“ inevitably figure as independent but intertwined entities should be in some way enriched. I will stop the ontological debate now and return to it a couple of times later when it is relevant to particular problems and, finally, in the conclusion.

### **1.2.2 Epistemology and Theory: Studying Islam and the Environment**

After the complicated preliminary considerations of extant approaches and the appropriate definition of the studied problem, it is now due to address more practical problems in the form of actual methods and the overall strategy of the research. Compared with the former problem, the basic method of this work is ultimately fairly simple. As dictated by the stated research questions and aims, it will comprise the collection and evaluation of empirical information about „Islam and the environment“ in general and about what has been defined as the *Islamic discourse on the environment* in particular. The sources of this information fall into two basic categories: in the first place, they comprise *primary sources* in the form of direct articulations of the discourse in books, articles, declarations, booklets, recorded speeches, blog posts, and other media, and possibly also documents providing the information about the circulation and dissemination of the discourse, its origins, impact, and context. Against some plans entertained in the earlier stages of the research, fieldwork methods (like interviews or participant observation) have not been ultimately included, and this is given their limited merit for achieving what has been defined as the work's aim, i.e., to address the discourse in overall terms.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, there are also *secondary sources* to be

---

<sup>15</sup> Notably, the pitfalls of applying fieldwork as a main strategy in a situation in which the discourse is not well mapped is demonstrated by the study of Vincenti (2017), which eventually failed to document the relevance of the discourse among the studied communities.

exploited, providing various kinds of information about the discourse and relevant actors.

Besides that, another set of questions relates to the methods of analysis and evaluation of this source material. And here, too, the elementary strategy will be relatively simple. The basic method of the work with the source material will be historical and oriented towards uncovering the *history of the discourse* through its chronicling, setting its individual occurrences in sequence, and establishing the broader configurations within the field by means of comparison, investigation of mutual links, and like. Nevertheless, this, by itself, except for not making the whole work particularly attractive, would not suffice to fulfill the other aims of the work and answer some crucial questions that have been posed. For that, it is necessary to perform a theoretical analysis and attempt to explain the aforementioned links and configurations in terms of causality and relationship to other social phenomena. This analysis may be complicated by the fact that the research addresses two largely disparate areas: both *Islam* and *the environment* possess their respective theoretical and disciplinary fields that are not usually connected together. Some of the theoretical means to overcome this problem and accomplish the analysis spring already from the considerations that have been made above. In this section, they will be supplemented by three other frameworks that guide and inspire the course of the analysis and explanation in the presented account. The first is rather abstract and concerns general methodological tenets; the following then ground this methodology in two particular disciplinary fields that are arguably most relevant to the whole theme.

### 1.2.2.a *Interdisciplinarity and Methodological Pluralism*

As far as *interdisciplinarity* is concerned as a methodological tenet, its primacy as an inevitable compound of any study of Islam in relation to the environmental context is quite apparent. The interdisciplinarity has been of primary concern ever since the environmental dimension of human agency *ceased to be ignored* (cf. York, Rosa and Dietz 2003, 279) in humanities and the social sciences after the rise of environmentalism in the 1960s (rendering the research of something like „religion and the environment“ by itself possible and meaningful),

and as such, and as it may be already apparent, it strongly informs the methodology applied in this work (the stress on interdisciplinarity is also inherent in the two following methodological prisms; see below; 1.2.2.b; 1.2.2.c). Still, the mere tenet of interdisciplinarity does not by itself resolve yet another question: how to deal with the plurality of disciplinary, theoretical, and methodological perspectives that necessarily result from the adoption of the interdisciplinarity tenet?

In the bulk of the work, I will critically engage with most of the theories and perspectives presented above (see 1.1.1) and discuss their validity, including in terms of conclusions or predictions. I will do so by juxtaposing them not only to each other but also to my own understandings and methodological assumptions presented in this and the previous section, as well as other theoretical perspectives. In rather a typical way, this process could be expected to finally lead to the construction of my own theoretical outlook, describing and analyzing the Islam-environment nexus in a new way and supplanting other theories, exposed in their particular aspects as inadequate or invalid. Certainly, my work will involve elements of such a procedure, which inevitably pertains to the scientific method. Nevertheless, one of my central methodological tenets will also be to express wariness in going too far in promoting a single view and theory and discarding the others.

To illustrate this problem by an example, in the preceding subsection, I have presented relatively clear and comprehensive assumptions about social reality (through the realist ontology of assemblages) upon which I will draw in what follows. Yet, at the same time, it is already clear that such a view is incoherent with some other claims, i.e., especially those that tend to essentialize either Islam (e.g., through pointing to eternal “Islamic values”) or the environment and environmental agenda in some way. In a widespread understanding of science, as proposed by Popper, the preferable way of resolving this incoherence would be to assess the particular theoretical outlooks in terms of their correspondence with “empirical findings,” in concord with the well-known principles of *verification* and *falsification* (see 2002). In what follows, I will, though, rather avoid this “empiricist” approach. This is for two reasons.

First, the hitherto articulated approaches to the problem of “Islam and the environment” are largely heterogeneous, and it may be said that they operate within different paradigms and sometimes world views. For example, for the group of authors who analyze the Islamic discourse on the environment from the “secular” standpoint (i.e., one not committed to a religious viewpoint but neither to a belief in the existence of transcendent ethics; admittedly, my own materialist ontology, as already indicated, pertains to this category; see also, e.g., Foltz 2003a; Schwencke 2012; Hancock 2018), it makes little sense to seriously assess the issue of the “substance” of the “Islamic environmental values” as the applied paradigm largely excludes it as a meaningful ontological category. The ontological category that is applied is instead that of “debate,” “movement,” or “discourse,” i.e., in general, the social fact of the articulation of Islamic values by particular actors and their circulation within the social field. On the other hand, for scholars engaging in the debate on religious environmental ethics (often from the perspective of the adherent of the faith; see, e.g., many of the studies in Foltz, Baharuddin, and Denny ed. 2003), the “substance” of the religious world view, of ethical teachings, injunctions, and commandments is the very subject of study. The criteria of “verification” and “falsification” may not be compatible in these two cases, or more precisely, they may not even comprise a meaningful methodological procedure. To approach the problem solely from the “empiricist” perspective would then mean to effectively discard them as a relevant contribution to the debate.

Second, the same perspective may not be tenable even on the more general level. As it is widely acknowledged, social sciences, since the time of their origin in 19th-century sociology, operate in a multi-paradigmatic mode splintered on such basic questions as whether to focus study on social macro-structures or actions taken by individuals (cf. Ritzer 2001, 62–77; see also above). Despite the long-term attempts to solve this problem through certain aspects of unification and standardization (see, e.g., Ritzer 2001; Genov 2019), the situation seems to remain the same, and, again, no standards of verification or falsification exist. Arguably, this may be attributed, among other things, to the fact that social sciences are intermingled with the social reality as their very subject of study (I leave aside whether this also holds for natural sciences as not least some environmentalist

critiques suggest), i.e., the imageries of sociologists and social scientists partake on the creation and adjustment of social conditions by their very reflection of it and is by itself discursive (cf. Genov 2019, 27). This discursivity may then by itself become a target of critique, as it is, in the context of “Islam and the environment” done by Anna Gade (2019), who refutes the very categories of religion and even knowledge, upon which other authors investigating the same phenomena depend, as culturally biased and skewed.

To resolve this problem of multiplicity and (a partial or complete) incoherence of views and theories, I will, in what follows, apply a specific tenet: although I will consistently build my claims on a particular theoretical standpoint, I will simultaneously exert restraint in assessing and judging other possible theoretical outlooks, preferring to seriously engage with them as with valid intellectual enterprises and integrate their potential contributions, rather than to refute them on the grounds of their theoretical incompatibility or (largely to same effect) compress them to my own conceptual categories while neglecting their inherent claims to present an equal and veritable knowledge.

I take inspiration in this approach from Paul Feyerabend, who, in his *Against Method*, proposes an epistemological position for which the co-existence and co-presence of a plurality of theoretical outlooks are essential. Feyerabend rejects the tendency, synthesized and propagated by Popper, that the contribution of a theory is measured mainly by its congruence with “facts,” i.e., empirically through the processes of verification and falsification. The main reason for this is that such an attitude promotes, in the first place, conformity to established theories and may potentially impede the progress of scientific knowledge. The “facts” cannot be used as an impartial criterion of veracity as they themselves derive from the theory. Unusual theories, even those contradicting well-established “facts” and counterintuitive ones, may provide new evidence, improving our knowledge. This is because

Knowledge so conceived is not a series of self-consistent theories that converges towards and ideal view; it is not a gradual approach to the truth. It is rather an ever increasing ocean of mutually incompatible alternatives, each single theory, each fairy-tale, each myth that is part of the collection forcing the others into greater articulation and all of the contributing, via this process of competition, to the development of our consciousness. (Feyerabend 1993, 21).

However radical, this „theoretical anarchism“ adopting overtly liberal criterion of what comprises legitimate knowledge is supported by Feyerabend with solid historical evidence showing that scientists whose work later gained “canonical” status often proceeded in a counter-inductive way (see, e.g., *ibid.* 14–19). Significantly for this study, the attitude preaching the necessity of consistency of a valid theory with established knowledge may lead to misinterpretation and neglect of scientific knowledge of ancient or non-European peoples (Feyerabend 2016, 6). The appropriate way is then, according to Feyerabend, a different one:

A scientist who wishes to maximize the empirical content of the views he holds and who wants to understand them as clearly as he possibly can must therefore introduce other views; that is, he must adopt a *pluralistic methodology*. He must compare ideas with other ideas rather than with ‘experience’ and he must try to improve rather than discard the views that have failed in the competition (Feyerabend 1993, 21).

Notably, Paul Feyerabend applies this tenet to *natural sciences*, which are rendered by the mainstream view as *those* based on empirical evidence in the first place and frequently also as if being in rapport with the verifiable truth in the form of “hard” measurements and data. More so, this pluralistic methodology must be seen as adequate in the realm of social sciences and humanities, where the character and veracity of the “evidence” are often feeble.

Practically, the adoption of this tenet will be reflected especially in that the ethical and “theological” question of the “Islamic values” related to the environment will be seriously considered throughout my work (see especially Chapter 2 and Chapter 3), and I will also include the assessment of it into the conclusion (instead of sidelining it as a “matter of interpretation”). A similar approach will also be preferred in the case of other not-fully-compatible theoretical outlooks (e.g., Gade 2019; Idllalène 2021).

### 1.2.2.b *Historical Sociology*

Upon discussing the general tenet of methodological pluralism, it is now possible to proceed towards more concrete methodological frameworks that will inform my study, and that should also help to make it more manageable in terms



of explanatory strategy and conceptual clarity. The first of them is the rather loose disciplinary tradition of *historical sociology*.

Historical sociology, which may be viewed as complementary to the aims of this work in which historical evidence plays not only descriptive but also theory-underpinning and theory-testing role can be, except for its institutional identity within academia, characterized by the following two traits. The first is the conviction about the fundamental complementarity of history and social theory. As Dennis Smith writes, “to oversimplify, historical sociology is the study of the past to find out how societies work and change” (Smith 1991, 3). Admittedly, there is nothing new in this complementarity as it is evidenced already in the beginnings of modern sociology in figures like Comte, Durkheim, or Weber (one may recall, for example, Weber’s famous analysis of capitalism and protestant ethics; see Weber 2001) and implicitly, the historical-sociological approach can be viewed as represented in many of the present-day mid-range theories. Yet, although it is extant and present as a possibility, it is also being neglected in many social-scientific works that sideline the temporal nature of social institutions as well as by historians sidelining the structural and processual aspects of history (cf. Smith 1991, 3). This negligence has also been observed in the case of the “Islam and the environment” debate (see 1.1.2.a). Historical sociology attempts to systematically tackle and transcend this rift. Paraphrasing convictions of, among others, A. Giddens and F. Braudel, Smith thus concludes that “history and sociology are one single intellectual adventure” (Braudel quoted in Smith 1991, 3) and that they may be methodologically integrated (ibid.). Since the 1960s, historical sociology established itself as an academic field mainly by focusing on long-term and large-scale processes generative of particular social structures and patterns (like modernity, capitalism, and nation-state), drawing especially on comparative methods bringing together historical evidence from various states and global regions (key works being, e.g., Skocpol 1979 and Mann 1986; see also Smith 1991, 4–7).

The second trait of historical sociology is the main agenda that characterizes it. As has already been indicated, this is mainly the theme of modernity and the birth and development of modern social institutions through which we live now (again, modernity, capitalism, and nation-state may serve as

good examples). During the last thirty years, the field has evolved from the “golden age” of the 1970s and 1980s (cf. Smith 1991, 3). As one of the main drivers of this evolution may be viewed the *globalization* of social sciences after the end of the Cold War, with ever more attention paid to the non-Western and otherwise marginal spatial and temporal areas defying the prevalent narratives of world history. A part of this has also been a conceptual critique aiming at the very spatial and temporal categories employed in analyzing the social phenomena such as *the state*, *the West*, and the like. According to this critique, entities of this kind have been misrepresented as stable and bounded (and we may recall here DeLanda’s criticism of thinking in “reified generalities”; 2016, 13—17; see also 1.2.1.a) whereas in reality, they are much more historically contingent, permeable, and dependent on context (see Go and Lawson 2017, 1–3). According to this view, the study of social phenomena must thus cover its various scopes, from local to global, while effectively negating the boundaries between both, which co-exist in one plane of reality (in contrast to “methodological nationalism” which separates “domestic” and “international”; Go and Lawson 2017, 4; see also Chernilo 2006). Here also, the strict delineation of historical sociology effectively ends, and it may be further characterized as a multi-paradigmatic and pluralistic methodology accepting virtually any agenda that may help to elucidate the current state of social reality and any methods serving this purpose (Go and Lawson 2017, 5).

Practically, the application of the prism of historical sociology means not only that the current discourse on Islam and the environment shall be studied with regard to its historical origins (that may help to explain its characteristics in the present) and its global disposition (that is in line with the program proposed by Go and Lawson, which demands to avoid the intra-state lock-in)<sup>16</sup> but also that due attention shall be paid to its existence along and in interaction with other large-scale historical processes and institutional developments. These will be included in the analysis mainly as a reflection on the process of modernization from the environmental perspective (3.1.1), the evolution of environmentalist thinking and discourse, and the ensuing establishment of particular (legal, bureaucratic, but also

---

16 The same warning about parochialism should not be met with complacency but must be heeded equally as well in the case of religion—equally as the in-state lock-in should be avoided, the in-religion lock-in should be avoided as well. As I have already expanded on in the previous section, Islam should not be regarded as stable, nor definitely a bounded entity, and attention should be paid to various „hybrid“ configurations.

academic) institutions (see especially 3.1.2; 4.1; 6.1.1), and in some cases also specific organizational trajectories and histories (see particularly 4.2). The focus on these overlaps will also be shortly shown to be consistent with and enhanced by the application of the prism of environmental history in what follows (on the complementarity of historical sociology with environmental history, see Cohen 2021).

Still, before that, it is useful to devote the last note to the realm of actual research methods and procedures where the historico-sociological approach may serve as a source of inspiration as well. Historical sociology, by its very nature and especially by its focus on (usually) large-scale and *longue durée* social processes, depends on collecting and analyzing vast amounts of historical material and evidence. As evidence of desirable extent cannot be typically obtained by a single researcher through the study of archival sources (not least because the historical-sociological arguments typically cut across different historical periods and academic specializations), historical sociologists typically strongly depend on the accounts of history collected and written by other researchers. In this regard, Michael Mann aptly notes that such practice requires “‘pillaging and looting’ raid into the work of archeologists, historians, anthropologists, economists, and political scientists who are studying groups around the world” (Mann 2004). As it should be already partly evident, neither I will abstain from this practice of “pillaging and looting” of what has been already written on the topic of “Islam and environment” as well as the other relevant phenomena. This will serve as a necessary means to complement the analysis of primary sources comprising the „body“ of the Islamic discourse on the environment that will comprise the core of the presented account.

### 1.2.2.c *Environmental History*

As already proposed, the study of “Islam and the environment” is not completely meaningful without including the analysis of the natural environment in its physical and material sense. A question may perhaps immediately arise in a critical reader’s mind: how should this be done? The environment is usually a subject of study by natural sciences undertaken by natural scientists and

underpinned by vastly different expertise and methods than the study of social phenomena. Besides that, it is not immediately clear what advantage the inclusion of the environment in its physical sense should bring into the debate about religion. After all, the state of the environment is widely (if superficially) understood, given the massive proliferation of the topic of environmental crisis in culture, politics, and mass media. There are, however, two problems with this coverage, and the integration of the “theme of the environment“ into the study of human society is arguably only slowly being overcome. First, most of the current approaches still treat the question drawing on the assumption about the eventual separateness between the realms of “natural” and “social” (i.e., along the lines of what Macnaghten and Urry criticize as either environmental “realism,” “idealism” or “instrumentalism,” see 1998, 1–2). Second, the greater part of this discourse is *presentist*. It focuses predominantly on current manifestations of what is conceived of as an acute *environmental crisis* and on future scenarios. This environmental crisis is often framed as new and actual, without precedent (in fact, in analogy to “globalization” equally as well presented as new phenomena connecting the hitherto fragmented and parochial world—see Go and Lawson’s criticism; 2017, 3). In such a situation, the “theme” of ecology indeed appears as something external to religion, which can, at the most, “comment” on it or adopt a particular “approach” towards it.

On the other hand, as one may observe, a proposition that “material” factors in general would be external to religion and would not significantly influence it is clearly false. One may only think of the debate on the role of *jizya* in the history of conversion in early Islamic history or more contemporary debates on the factor of oil money distributed through charitable organizations in the spread of militant Salafism (see, e.g., Beránek and Ťupek 2008) or even the role of economic deprivation in the spread of this ideology among Muslims in suburbs of European metropolises. What seems to be the real difference is that the material factors that are ordinarily considered are mostly of an *economic* nature, i.e., they concern the flows and distribution of what is conceived of as “resources” (often ultimately converted to their monetary value and thought about in terms of their utility and exchange value). One of the most significant redefinitions achieved by the emergence of environmental thinking is, though, that the material-natural

cannot be thought of and understood in a utilitarian-economic way only but must be instead understood *in its own terms* and with regard for *ecological relations* where each of the elements (most generally nature and society) follow its own logic of functioning and one cannot be reduced to a “resource” for the second.<sup>17</sup> A clear example is that of oil, which, once the environmental perspective is applied, can no longer be conceived of as *only* a raw material or source of revenue but must also be appreciated as carbon, which has been a long time ago absorbed from the atmosphere via biological processes and which is now being returned into it by burning the fossilized remains of these processes.

In this sense, the talk about the “ecological crisis” does not necessarily mean that the environmental perspective is applied as we may easily evaluate such crisis in economic terms, which we also often do. The environmental perspective, in turn, may be applied virtually indiscriminately to any phenomena, whether it relates to environmental problems, crisis, or not (this does, of course, not deny that the ecological crisis bestows upon such perspective its contemporary vital role). This also inevitably means that to achieve the true interdisciplinary environmental perspective in evaluating *social* phenomena, one cannot avoid including the analysis of “nature” as the realm traditionally assigned to study by natural sciences. Conversely, if less obviously, natural scientists may equally as little afford to neglect the analysis of social phenomena in particular cases, as far as it becomes a significant factor affecting ecological relations within non-human nature. As Konopásek (2020, 44) notes, the shift of paradigm (if it would not be even more appropriate to speak about the overall epistemological shift) that comes with the full consideration of environmental relations consists of nothing less than one of the most long-lasting modern dichotomies separating the natural and social sciences must come down. This happens primarily by the inclusion of human and social factors into the (hitherto purportedly “objective”) sphere of the natural (*ibid.*).<sup>18</sup> If the environmental perspective is to be applied meticulously, this also means that it should not stop in our contemporary period marked by the

---

17 Ecological relations can also be identified as relations of exteriority in contrast to the economic-utilitarian view of nature, which makes it „interior“ to society as a „raw material“ for the satisfaction of human needs (cf. Deleuze and Guattari 1987).

18 Such aspect is most clearly visible, e.g., in situations of epidemic or pandemic where the social (in the way of collective behavior, traffic etc.) holds a strong causal link to the spread of the disease (a „natural“ process if we give credence to the hypothesis about the spontaneous mutation of the virus), with most powerful implications for the human interest and utility itself.

sharpening of ecological relations but may also be applied retrospectively in history. Put differently, the current “environmental problems” faced by 21st-century humanity are not of any ontological novelty. Rather, they present a quantitatively and, in many respects, qualitatively new *phase* of the necessary and perpetual interrelationship between “nature” and “civilization.” The current problems thus may be said to have only opened our eyes to the existence of this interrelationship, which had been previously ignored or conceived as predestined, stable, and predictable.

From the 1960s on, the rise of the consciousness of the significance of the ecological relations upon which the human economic, political, and other activity depends and which are simultaneously open to the possibility of profound alteration by this very activity has led to a systematic application of the environmental perspective in historical research. A number of authors have since then proved the viability and vitality of the new perspective. An early example of such literature may be the 1972 Alfred Crosby’s *Columbian Exchange*, which redefined what had been hitherto considered a milestone in human history as an *ecological* event that brought to an end almost an eon-old separation between the landmasses of Americas and Eurasia and resulted in a wholesale transfer of biota like agricultural crops but also weeds and pathogens across the Atlantic in both directions with—needless to say—grave impacts on the human economic and political history (see Crosby 1972). Since then, the perspective of *environmental history*, gradually established as an academic field on its own, has been applied to a wide range of historical periods and regions and has proven that the basic environmentalist dictum that humans are but a *part of* (“the rest of”; see McNeill 2003, 6) *nature* and cannot be separated from it, is indispensable in studying history, bringing into it new and vital explanations (for an overview of the field see especially McNeill 2003; 2010; Hughes 2016).

The agenda of the environmental history may be separated into two broad areas. The first one concerns what may be called the „material“ (see McNeill 2003, 6) environmental history. This can be further defined, drawing on Hughes (2016, 4), as consisting of „the influence of environmental factors on human history [and] the environmental changes caused by human actions and the many ways in which human-caused changes in the environment rebound and affect the

course of change in human societies.” The second then covers the “intellectual” (see McNeill 2003, 6) aspects of this history, or “the history of human thought about the environment and the ways in which patterns of human attitudes have motivated actions that affect the environment“ (Hughes 2016, 5). Significantly, what constitutes here the “environment” is defined rather negatively than positively, i.e. as something which had been long *neglected* in the study of human history. As McNeil once noted, environmental history comes forth as yet another „revisionist” strand of history (like once social and economic history and more recently, e.g., feminist history or the subaltern studies). Essentially, environmental history thus does not negate other “strands” of history and is not strictly differentiated from other endeavors to uncover the human past. Ideally, it should be integrated with other historical explanations to paint a richer and more complete picture of this past and shed new light on various historical problems.

The basic tenets exposed above—namely the anti-essentialist view of reality harboring regard for the great variety of mutually exterior assemblages that constitute it, methodological pluralism ordering the inclusion of as many theoretical points of view as possible, and the research program which effectively wipes off the boundaries between social theory and history are thus complementary to the environmental history—in fact, they are pushed further as new methods and theories from the realm of natural sciences are brought into consideration (as paleoclimatology or paleobotany complements the use of archeological evidence and archives and theorizations of ecological relations complements the traditional outlooks on social structure and social change). The French school of *Annales*, which, in fact, pioneered environmental-historical thinking in a significant sense (cf. McNeill 2010, 348–349), can be again mentioned as a paragon of this integrative approach.

The environmental history as a general framework will be applied to studying the intersection between “Islam and the environment” in this work in two basic ways. First, the presented account may be identified with a study of the *intellectual* environmental history of Islam. As such, it will attempt to record how nature and ecological relations have been represented in Islamic texts throughout the researched period—and that is mostly the modern period starting from the 1960s. At the same time, the application of the environmental-historical

perspective, which can be in this sense viewed as an experiment, will enhance the consciousness about the situatedness of this particular period in a broader historical landscape of the Islamic thinking about nature in preceding periods, starting with the Qur'an and *hadith*. It will be later argued that the interrogation of the contemporary Islamic intellectual environmental history may render the study of these earlier periods possible, even though they will, strictly speaking, remain outside this work's scope. The second way of applying environmental history will include the context of *material* environmental history in general, providing a necessary background of the interaction of human (not least Muslim) societies with the environment in the physical sense over time and its direct and indirect repercussions.

Overall, no comprehensive environmental history of Islam has been hitherto written (cf. Mikhail 2013b, 9; 2017, 14). This is even though there is a vivid emerging research field on the history of Muslim societies that can be illustrated in the Middle East. Although long neglected (cf. McNeill 2010, 366; Mikhail 2013b, 1), especially since the 2010s, several publications that in some way or another took the interaction between human societies and the environment as their main theme began to appear. Some of them focused on the pre-modern history of the region, analyzing problems as diverse as the management of the exploitation and distribution of natural resources (especially in connection with the agricultural production and ecology of irrigated river basins; Mikhail 2011; 2017; Husain 2021; see also Christensen 1993), the role of climatic fluctuations on economic and political stability (White 2011), epidemic diseases (Varlık 2015), natural disasters (Ayalon 2015) and even the history of animals (Mikhail 2013). Still, other researchers approached various problems and themes pertaining to the modern era, covering a diversity of geographical settings and time frames from (again) the intensively cultivated alluvial plains in Egypt and Iraq (and still elsewhere) and their transformations under a variety of colonial and post-colonial state-centralist and capitalist political regimes (Barnes 2014; Pursley 2019; Jakes 2020; Derr 2020; Gratien 2022) to more marginal areas, such as Palestine, French North Africa or Saudi Arabia, where the ecological transformations, often related again to colonial and development policies, were no less momentous (Sufian 2007; Davis 2007; Jones 2010; Segalla 2020). There are also studies focused on



contemporary problems, often related to environmental repercussions brought about by modern transformations (Guarasci 2015; McKee 2016; Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2019; Scramelli 2021). Some collections also attempted to bring forth broader, region-wide, and long-term perspectives (Davis and Burke III 2011; Mikhail 2013a; İnal and Köse 2019). Overall, Islam is scarcely presented as an important factor in these histories. The study of the Islamic discourse on the environment should, among other things, help to establish whether there is any place for its incorporation.

Overall, in my work, I will thus attempt to sketch an intellectual history of the Islamic discourse on the environment as a phenomenon that has appeared and proliferated during the last half-century in the context of the longer historical continuity of the Islamic tradition. For that, I will, except for the methodological frameworks applied above, draw on the field of environmental history as an important resource of analytical and interpretative methods as well as of the already established knowledge in the form of concrete facts and findings. These will, among other things, concern the fundamental context of global environmental change, as well as the development of environmentalist thinking and practice, represented in each chapter as the most immediate and indispensable context of the evolution of the specifically Islamic discourse on the matter (see 3.1; 4.1.; and finally the discussion in 6.3). This will be driven by the conviction that what has been discussed in this chapter as the “Islam and the environment” intersection can be best and most meaningfully understood as a part of environmental history that is truly global and universal. I will now begin with an overview of the discourse, its spatial and temporal characteristics, and its main themes.

## 2 Postmodern Assemblage or Eternal Values? An Overview of the Islamic Discourse on the Environment

After discussing in detail the methodology and theory informing the work, I will now attempt to draw a basic picture of the Islamic discourse on the environment and the discursive field within which it operates. In the first part of the chapter, I will discuss a typical example of the discourse and then survey the discursive field by identifying the most important *artifacts* in the form of influential and most frequently circulated individual texts and statements. This will be set into a basic social context of their emergence and circulation comprising implicated actors, institutions, and spatiotemporal distribution, highlighting the historical nature of the phenomena evolving in time and occupying a particular social space. This survey will highlight the plurality and heterogeneity of the discourse and also further outline the strategy of its analysis—as this plurality and heterogeneity will be the main point of interest in the following chapters. While the first part of the chapter will thus paint a picture of a deterritorialized assemblage, the second part will focus on an element that connects it—an elementary shared understanding of the meaning of the tradition’s source texts vis-à-vis environmental problems. Throughout it, I will analyze the effort to infer the “Islamic view” on the environment from the scriptural “code” of the Islamic tradition (the Qur’an, hadith, and other sources) by listing its most essential and frequently employed tropes and also attempt to capture it theoretically. For that purpose, I will propose the concept of the virtual Islamic environmental *catechism*. This catechism will be shown to be tentatively shared

across the whole discursive field but still versatile enough to underpin different ways of argumentation and sometimes also different conclusions about the character of the environmental problems, their substance, ways of solution, and the role of Islam in all that. This will subsequently be of use in the more detailed reviews of the given sections of the discourse in individual chapters. In an archaeological metaphor, the following chapter will thus serve as a basic map of a city or compound, providing a preliminary orientation by marking and describing the readily visible objects that will be then utilized in “digging deeper” and unearthing the less directly apparent structures.

## **2.1 Mapping the Plurality: Basic Definitions, Facts, and the Historical and Spatial Overview**

In the most elementary definition, the *Islamic discourse on the environment* can be viewed simply as a set of texts and statements. The basic questions are: How can this set be defined and demarcated theoretically? What do these texts and statements say? How and where do they circulate? And what are the conditions and circumstances of their circulation? Hopefully, the first part of this chapter will provide a basic answer to all of these questions. Let me begin with the first one.

### **2.1.1 Defining the Field: The Structure of the Discourse**

As explained in the introduction, the basic definition of the phenomenon studied in this work is that of a *discourse*, a concept popularized in social science by Michel Foucault (2002a, 2002b). As such, the concept refers to a quantity of textual material (books, articles, declarations, speeches, conversations) approached without subjecting it to some pre-determined understandings or categorizations and with an aim to draw such categorizations from its inner regularities and relationships to other discourses (cf. Foucault 2002b, 23–33). Therefore, instead of approaching the discourse as “environmental ethics,” “theology,” “exegesis,” or “doctrine” (each of which represents in particular aspects a restrictive category with hidden preconceptions), I will now attempt to find a broader definition that could serve as a common denominator for all of these and thereby also a demarcation of the field as a whole. Arguably, this can be best done by a concrete example.

### 2.1.1.a *A Model Text: Islamic Declaration on the Global Climate Change*

As particular example of what is studied in this work as the Islamic discourse on the environment, e.g., the *Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change* in 2015 (IFEES 2015), may be mentioned. This text (which I will discuss again in a more narrow context in 5.1.1.c) counts among well-known documents that, unlike in many other cases of the Islamic discourse of this kind, attracted wider public attention. Comprising an appeal to the global community to unite in the fight against global climate change explicitly addressed to the 21st Conference of Parties (COP) within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris, 2015, it can be discursively located among many statements of a similar kind. What makes it specific is that it is defined as *Islamic*. Although the authors, unlike in the case of the *Laudato Si'* encyclical issued by Pope Francis (2015) around the same time, cannot claim a universal institutional authority (which is absent in Islam) and neither represent a sufficiently broad base of signatories, they speak on behalf of Islam nevertheless. They underpin their view with references to scriptural tradition:

God created the earth in perfect equilibrium (*mīzān*); By His immense mercy we have been given fertile land, fresh air, clean water and all the good things on Earth that make our lives here viable and delightful; The earth functions in natural seasonal rhythms and cycles: a climate in which living beings – including humans – thrive; The present climate change catastrophe is a result of the human disruption of this balance [...] (IFEES 2015, 2.3).<sup>19</sup>

The passage is followed by a quotation of the Qur'anic verse from the surat *al-Raḥmān* where the concept of *mīzān* (i.e., “balance” or “equilibrium”) appears, together with the call to not to transgress it: „He raised the heaven and established the balance so that you would not transgress the balance. Give just weight – do not skimp in the balance. He laid out the earth for all living creatures“ (55:7–10; quoted in IFEES 2015). Along with this, the declaration actualizes a number of other similar motives. Among these, we may count the framing of the statement in the overall theistic worldview, wherein the universe is presented as a perfected creation of the merciful Creator (IFEES 2015, 1.1; see also 2.1–2.3) and man's role is delineated as that of caretaker or steward (*khalīfa*; see 1.3) who is

<sup>19</sup> In what follows, I refer to the articles of the statement.

responsible for doing good and avoiding evil and is accountable for his actions (2.6–2.7). The adverse ecological impacts of human activity, including the alteration of the composition of the atmosphere and others, are identified with the concept of „corruption“ (*fasād*; see 2.5), which frequently appears in the Qur’ān and holds strongly negative connotations. This connection is, among other things, supported by a quotation of the Qur’anic verse (which is one of the most frequently quoted in the whole discourse) from the surat *al-Rūm*: „Corruption has appeared on land and sea by what people’s own hands have wrought, that He may let them taste some consequences of their deeds, so that they may turn back“ (30:41; quoted in IFEES 2015, 2.5).

As we may notice, by alluding to its commensurability with *fasād*, climate change is identified as inconsistent with the commands of God and the way of life prescribed by Islam. This is supported by still other references, like those to *fiṭra* (the „natural pattern“ of the creation; see 2.4) or the way of life of the Prophet who, among other things, „declared and protected the rights of all living beings [...] established protected areas (*himās*) for the conservation and sustainable use of rangelands, plant cover, and wildlife [...] lived a frugal life, free of excess, waste, and ostentation; renewed and recycled his meager possessions by repairing or giving them away; ate simple, healthy food, which only occasionally included meat“ (2.8). Referring to these motives and to the scientific data and their interpretations establishing the causal link between human practice, climate change, and its impacts on terrestrial life, the authors address a call that is directed toward the global community, including states, private companies, and people, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, to partake in the global effort to mitigate the climate change (3.1–3.6).

What does this text signify? Except for representing a genre of communal statements on climate politics and perhaps still another genre of public statements on behalf of a religious community on social and political issues, it represents a text in which the connection of “Islam and the environment” clearly appears even if in a specific way, related to the problem of climate change. As such, the *Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change* can be viewed as a part of the Islamic discourse on the environment and, indeed, it will be later shown to be comprehensible and explainable in its concrete occurrence and the specific form

precisely as a part of a debate that had been much broader and that underwent a relatively long evolution before. But how can this discourse be defined in general terms, and what are its distinct traits—ones that should also be well apparent in this individual example?

### 2.1.1.b *A Common Denominator: Conveying a Truth*

Apparently, what the document does is to speak on behalf of Islam, addressing a specific environmental problem. As such, it articulates and stipulates a detailed “Islamic view” on climate change. This trait, which has already been identified as one of the significant (and, in fact, dominant) approaches in addressing the “Islam and the environment” theme within academia (see 1.1.1.a), is essential. The presence of the “Islamic view” implies that the statement is not made on behalf of the author and his personal conviction but that it invokes a religious, transcendent authority of Islam—i.e., that of God’s revelation and inspiration. This distinction is also commonly noted by authors writing from the “empirical” viewpoint, who point out that “Islamic environmentalism” is not defined as being formulated by Muslims but instead posits the Islamic tradition as a voice of authority, or in other words, by speaking from the perspective or even in the name of Islam, appealing to the scriptural sources of the tradition—and as such it is contrasted to “Muslim” or “Muslim world” environmentalism, i.e. environmentalism that is promoted and practiced by Muslims, but without a specific reference to Islam, its concepts or its scriptures (cf. Schwencke 2012, 9; Hancock 2018, 54; Foltz 2003b, 252).

Certainly, such a definition is, to a large degree, valid and covers most of the relevant cases. This is because articulating the “Islamic view” on environmental problems is indeed the form of the discourse that primarily prevails in practice. Still, this definition has a disadvantage, namely by being based on a set of external signs, i.e., discursive practices that are expected to take place, such as quoting from the Qur’an and promoting the “Islamic view of environmental problems” in a kind similar to the established forms of the “secular” environmentalism. As such, it imposes on the phenomena criteria that may correspond with the prevailing form of the discourse but may not be clear enough

to account for the liminal forms of the discourse. What exactly does it mean that Islamic environmentalism is “motivated” (Foltz 2003b, 252) or “inspired” (Schwencke 2012, 9) by “Islamic sources”? In this regard, we may mention S. H. Nasr, who is frequently quoted as the first author to formulate such an “Islamic view.” However, in his 1968 *Man and Nature* (see [1968] 1990), this is willfully articulated as a part of a more general argument about the distinction between the materialist and metaphysical view of nature, reflecting the author’s specific doctrinal allegiances and his Traditionalist position that may be incompatible with other expressions of the discourse (for more on that see 3.2.1). Another example in point may be Gade, who attributes to Islam and Islamic scriptures a particular value, yet one that is understood differently and in a willful contrast to other mainstream expressions (see 2019); the same is, to various degrees true, about other accounts that aim to put in doubt the broader consensus (see Tlili 2012; Idllalène 2021).

Therefore, I find it helpful to use a different definition on which I will lean throughout this study. Within this, the Islamic discourse on the environment can be most generally defined by the idea that Islam as a religion and tradition (terms which may vastly differ in content) has something to say about the man-environment relationship or, more precisely—if we express the same idea in a different manner—that there is a particular *truth regarding the relationship between Islam and the environment*. Such a definition is also in accord with Foucault’s observation that the transmission of truth (and promotion of its various “regimes”) is one of the primary functions of the circulation of discourses in the social realm (see Lorenzini 2015).

It is clear that the above-stated example of the *Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change* readily fits into this category. It proposes a particular truth according to which the anthropocentric climate change contravenes the Islamic injunctions by upsetting the balance (*mīzān*) established in the universe, spreading corruption (*fasād*) on the earth, and reneging on the responsibility to act as a guardian (*khalīfa*) of the natural world. As such, this truth can be compared to other truths of a similar kind about “Islam and politics,” “Islam and socialism,” or “Islam and gender,” and compared to a situation where there is no such truth present. Arguably, it is also this notion of truth transmitted by the discourse —and



not a mere quotation from the Qur'an and hadith—that makes it meaningful and potentially powerful. It is only because the declaration can invoke the *truth* of *Islam* (a tradition, in the truth of which many people believe) that it can pose as a document of particular significance, even to those who may not consider Islam a “true” religion and worldview.

Arguably, the Islamic discourse on the environment may be thus defined by the discursive practice of *delineating and promoting a particular “truth” about Islam and the environment*. It is necessary to admit that it is a relatively marginal phenomenon compared to discourses that transmit major scientific, legal, or moral truths, grounding the everyday functions of our societies (cf. Foucault 1991; 2008). But still, in its basic structure as well as in its aspiration to play the role of such major truth, it is well comparable to them.

And there are, in fact, still other aspects in which it is comparable, namely in that this truth may be expressed in various ways, may be contested, and in that its relevance and presence in society—as well as the possibility of its acceptance and validity—depends on the actual circulation of the discourse which may be time- and place-specific, concern various social groups and strata and relate to other discourses and social practices. How can the discourse be described from this viewpoint, i.e., through the discursive field?

### **2.1.2 Mapping the Field: The Scope and Structure of the Discourse**

With the working definition of the discourse obtained by looking into the basic structure of its individual statement—transmitting a truth about Islam and the environment—it is now possible to proceed toward the structure of the discursive field in its overall proportions. Where did it originate? What is its scope? What different social assemblages is it related to? And what different versions and variations of the truth about Islam and the environment can be registered in it? I will continue to discuss this question throughout the following chapters, and now, I will begin with a basic overview. As with all the other parts, this is based on the collected material obtained by a sustained following of the discourse over a couple of years and extensive bibliographical research. Even

though I have admittedly not been able to include *all* texts speaking to the theme of “Islam and the environment” (and it will be shortly evident that something like this is not possible given the sheer extent of the field), I have still attempted to achieve a measure of representativity.

### 2.1.2.a *The Temporal Structure: Origins and Timespan*

The question of the origins of the discourse may seem contestable, given the presence of the primordialist perspective that has been already discussed above and that may now be related to the above-described basic structure of the discourse. As far as the discourse is concerned with the “truth” of the Islamic view of the environment, to identify this truth, to reach to the primeval scriptural sources is but a natural procedure. Therefore, for many, the “origins” of the discourse are nowhere else than in the Qur’an itself, along with shari‘a, hadith, and other authoritative discourses of the past—to search for them elsewhere may be viewed as not meaningful.

Yet against that, it can be objected that while the Qur’an or hadith are undoubtedly the source of “truth,” they can be at the same time hardly regarded texts speaking specifically to the issues of the environment—in fact, by virtue of comprising the “code” (see 1.2.1.a; 1.2.1.b) of the whole Islamic tradition, they are a source of truth on virtually any matter. Despite the presence of many fragments in the form of narrations and injunctions about animals, trees, plants, directions on how to treat some elements of living nature in specific cases, evaluations in which particular elements of the universe are attributed a given meaning, and even specific texts that hold a privileged status due to their focus on nature as a whole or questions of man-nature relationship that may relate to *some* of the contemporary concerns (I will analyze many of these in the second part of this Chapter; see 2.2), there seem to be no texts attempting to resolve the question of the “truth” of the Islamic stance on the environmental issues in a comprehensive manner before a certain point in time.

This fact is clearly connected to a universal change transcending the boundaries of the Islamic tradition, which will be more closely debated later (see 3.1): the introduction of the very concept of *the environment* to the broader

popular interest, essentially as a concept of nature that is fundamentally *alterable* by human activity to the point that this alteration may affect the human condition itself. Significantly, this *discursive* change happened in the context of revelations of the already occurring negative effects of *environmental* change, documented by scientific findings and experience. It is also this radical alteration of the discourse on nature, which can be located in the period of the 1960s that probably incited Muslim authors (who progressively absorbed it as anyone else) to substantially reinterpret the fragments of the hadith and the Qur'an in a new way and set out to systematize the "Islamic view" of the environment. In fact, there is a strong argument for such a historical interpretation: if such an "Islamic view" would be sufficiently represented in the tradition beforehand, there would be no need for this new kind of discourse. So even if we would include the older layers of the tradition into the ambit of the Islamic discourse on the environment (and this question is admittedly intricate, and I will yet return to it), the shape of this discourse seems to be radically different now, to the point that it cannot be easily compared to these historical instances.

It is also the relation of Islam to such conceived nature, i.e., *the environment*, in contrast to older notions of nature (I briefly discuss these in 3.1.2.c) that will be of interest in this study, and in this sense, to ask about the origins of the discourse and its development thus means to operate within a relatively specific temporal framework that now spans over about sixty years. What can be said about this development?

First, it is possible to observe that its pace was initially relatively slow. This is even though there is, in fact, an example of a text by a Muslim author conveying a determinate truth about Islam and the environment (which, although referred to still as „nature,“ was understood fully in the new sense) published already in 1968 by the Iranian philosopher Seyyed Hossein Nasr under the title *Man and Nature: Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man* in 1968 ([1968] 1990; based on Rockefeller lectures delivered by the author about two years earlier at the University of Chicago). This book is in many respects as important as exceptional and will serve as an important source for the further analysis of the basic structure of the discourse in the next chapter (see 3.b; 3.c). Remarkably, other contributions (such as that of Husaini 1980; Zaidi 1981; Ba Kader et al. 1983, Sardar 1984a,

Naseef 1986) gradually followed only slowly in the decade after the 1980s—which is also the time when the first occurrences of the discourse can be registered in Arabic (Maqsud 1986). Presumably, the discourse existed over this period precisely just as a *discourse*, comprising just little more than ideas being released into circulation via books and periodicals of a limited currency and only occasionally by statements that attempted to claim broader representativity (Naseef 1986). In this sense, it seems to be only the period of the 1990s that, equally as it brought an enhanced interest in environmental matters globally, widened the circulation of the Islamic environmental discourse.

This may be evidenced on the one hand through the enhanced publishing activity. The decade saw the proliferation of book-length publications on Islam and the environment, initially in the form of collections (Khalid and O'Brien 1992; Abdel Haleem 1998) but progressively also as monographs (Akhtaruddin 1997; Izzi Dien 2000) and a much greater volume of articles published across various platforms. These were also not restricted to English but included works issued in Arabic (Faqqi 1993; Sartawi 1999; Shirazi 2000) and Turkish (Özdemir 1997) as well as books issued in India (Bhati and Jannat 1995) together with similar occurrences of the discourse in Indonesia (see Gade 2015, 166) and perhaps also across other geographical contexts, although this is hard to establish. Another evidence of this growing currency of the discourse comprises its morphing into specialized institutional structures and the attempts to enact it in practice. As such, the decade saw the establishment of presumably the first Islamic environmental NGO (IFEES in 1994; see also 5.1.1.a) and the convening of the first broad-based conference on Islam and the environment at Harvard University in 1998 (see 6.1.2). This ascent continued around the turn of the millennium when the governments of Muslim countries (partly picking up trends that appeared already in 1980; see 4.2.1) temporarily expressed an interest in the adoption of the discourse and sponsored conferences and publishing activities in this direction (see WFEIP 2000; ISESCO 2002a; ISESCO 2002b; UNGA 2001; see also 4.2.3).

It is also around this time that the discourse can be evidenced as slowly becoming *generic*—in the sense that the debate on Islam and the environment, including its specific outcomes, becomes widely circulated and available. This

finally enabled anyone interested in adopting a view on the problem (seeking the truth about „Islam and the environment“) to draw on a variety of sources (e.g., the significant and widely quoted publications by Foltz, Denny, and Baharuddin [2003] Qaradawi [2001] and others) and also elicited the existence of a small, but vocal activist movement that progressively took roots, especially among the Western Muslim diaspora. Undoubtedly, this proliferation was also enhanced by the spread of new communication media like blogs in the 2000s and social media after 2010.

Returning to the previous chapter, we may also notice that it is in the wake of this *generalization* of the discourse that scholarly works, not focused on the „truth“ of the Islamic view of the environment but the phenomena of the proliferation of the discourse about this truth and its various manifestations emerge (1.1.1.b).<sup>20</sup> This generic Islamic discourse, circulating across various media and contexts and expressed in multiple different ways, is also something we can most readily encounter now and something that continues to exist and will probably develop in the future. How far does this discourse reach, and what are its different modalities?

### 2.1.2.b *The Spatial Distribution and Diversification*

The universalized Islamic discourse on the environment seems now to circulate across almost indefinite contexts, not limited to a particular group or movement. This can be first well illustrated through its geographical spread and expression in different languages and by actors of different nationalities. Beginning with book-length publications, these, except for English, Arabic, and Turkish, which have been already mentioned, can be found in Persian (Taraqi 1394/2015; Fahimi 1396/2017; Lafmejani 1394/2015), Urdu (Qadri 2021; Qasmi and Khalid 2023), Indonesian (Hermanto and Rohmi 2023; see also Mangunjaya and McKay 2012; Gade 2015) French (Khermimoun 2018; Ali 2020), German (Kowanda-Yasin 2018; Karimi 2022) or Spanish (Ozdemir 2012). This span significantly extends once we include other media like academic or newspaper and magazine articles, websites, blogs, and social media posts. These count

---

<sup>20</sup> For historical accounts, especially of the earlier phase of the development of the discourse see studies by Foltz (2003b), Samuel (2010), Schwencke (2012, 10–22), Hancock (2018, 54–68).

literally thousands of texts that, with most probability, include virtually all languages spoken by Muslims or otherwise relevant—this includes even small languages with minor Muslim communities like Hungarian (MML n.d.) or Czech (Rajab 2018). The ubiquitousness of the discourse can be, among other things, attributed to its willful dissemination. The Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*), for example, has published a brochure under the title „Islam and the environment“ (for a version in Turkish, see DRA n.d.a) that is freely available at the institution’s website in German, Albanian, Chinese, Dutch, Filipino, Finish, French, English, Spanish, Swedish, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Norwegian, Portuguese, Russian and Greek (see DRA n.d.b). An entry on „Islam and the environment“ is also included in the publication *Key to Understanding Islam*, issued in Saudi Arabia by the World Muslim League and translated into most world languages (see Sheha 2016, 45).

This geographical diversity, after all, manifests itself also in the background of the participants in the academic debate on „Islam and the environment,“ which has already been discussed (1.1.1) and that, although it is led predominantly in English, includes among significant speakers authors from Iran (Seyed Hossein Nasr), Turkey (İbrahim Özdemir), Indonesia (Azizan Baharuddin, Fachruddin Mangunjaya), Malaysia (Adi Setia), Pakistan (Syed Nomanul Haq), India (Mohammad Aslam Parvaiz), Saudi Arabia (Mawil Izzi Dien) and still other countries.

This diversity is equally as well reflected by the representation of various doctrinal allegiances within Islam. It includes not only Sunni authors but also Shi‘is (see e.g., Shirazi 2000; Javadi-Amoli 1386) and others. While many of the speakers engaged in debating the Islamic environmental “values“ can be designated as Islamic „modernists“ (i.e., most of the names listed in the previous paragraph), and many (particularly in the West) subscribe to liberal understandings of the faith, there are also voices coming from more traditional backgrounds and promoting visions that are deeply conservative (see Qaradawi 2001; Javadi-Amoli 1386; Shirazi 2000; Shihata 2001). As already shown, the discourse has also been adopted by institutions, diverging in their affiliations and commitments as well. The discourse has also involved radical actors, including (some of them infamous) Islamist groups (see IEA n.d.a; Hizb al-Tahrir 2009).

Eventually, neither has it remained restricted to Muslim actors—to mention just the example of a member of the British royal family, Prince Charles (now King Charles III; see Prince Charles 2010). All of these actors use different media and genres to voice their views. The discourse appears in books, articles, on various internet platforms, and in institutional documents attempting to set its “official” version (see Ba Kader et al. 1983; ISESCO 2002a); it is delivered in public speeches, academic lectures, papers at conferences, sermons, and, like in the already recalled 2015 *Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change* (IFEES 2015), addresses global audiences in the attempt to represent the Muslim voice in the environmental debate.

This diversity is also reflected by different framings. Although rooted in the shared conviction about the authority and universal relevance of the Islamic source texts, which will be discussed shortly, the Islamic discourse eventually produces distinct questions regarding the relationship to the environment—and this is from different points of view and sometimes results in different conclusions. Both Hancock (2018, 69–98) and Schwencke (2012, 21–22, 62–63) notice this diversity as “different framings” and “distinct discourses.”

For many—and this counts especially for shorter genres—the issue is often just to express the „Islamic view“ of the environment without further attributes or specific framings, simply as a general conceptual framework immediately present within the tradition. Nonetheless, the authors engaging in more extensive elaborations of the topic or speaking to specific audiences usually proceeded to incorporate the whole theme into broader interpretative frameworks and relate it to further questions and concerns. This may, on the one hand, include the frameworks that closely resemble and conform to the „Western“ or „secular“ environmentalism. As such, the Islamic normativity vis-à-vis the environment has been related to the concepts of *sustainable development* (ISESCO 2002a; 2002b; Jayyousi 2012; IFEES 2015) or *environmental ethics* (Izzi-Dien 1992; 2004; Özdemir 2003; Damkhi 2008; Yaseen 2014), complementing more or less the generic discourse and conservationist agenda of international organizations and ENGOs. The discourse has also been connected to specialized or specific agendas and strategies: this may concern the areas of environmental education (Lafmejani 1394/2014; Mohamed 2014), business ethics (Abdelzaher and Abdelzaher 2015;

Shaikh 2013), degrowth (Jayyousi 2015), environmental justice (Abdul-Matin 2010), a model for sustainable architecture and urbanism (Haider 1984, Waziri 2004), or environmental law-making (Ba Kader et al. 1983; Idllalène 2021).

Still, for other authors, the synergy with the “Western” frameworks may not have been the priority. Particularly among the scholars of traditional background, “Islam and the environment” has been viewed as independent of such frameworks and connected instead to an imaginary of Islam constituting a sufficient conceptual and normative system in and of itself (Qaradawi 2001, Shirazi 2000, Shihata 2001, Bin Hamza 2016; see also 5.1.2). And in many cases, it has presented an opportunity for polemic. In fact, such polemic can be traced back to the first occurrence of the discourse, with S. H. Nasr debating the ecological crisis as a manifestation of the spiritual crisis of modern society and its scientism and secularism ([1968] 1990). This “subversive” aspect has been preserved and has taken many forms. From the “ascetic” criticism of the materialist and worldly focus of life, bereft of “higher” spiritual and ethical values and leading to decadence (see Nasr [1968] 1990; Eaton 1998; Shah-Kazemi 2021), the critique of the “usurious” economic system undermining both social and environmental equity (Vadillo and Khaild 1992; Dutton 1998), to the direct accusations of the West (or particular nations like the US) causing wanton environmental destruction in what is viewed as evidence of a wholesale moral bankruptcy (Qaradawi 2001; Bin Laden [2002] 2005; Gum‘a 2011; see also 5.1). It is useful to note that, in many cases, these motives combine, and it is not completely possible to separate them from each other.

### *2.1.2.c Structuring the Diversity: How to Proceed with the Analysis*

Overall, this overview already demonstrates that the Islamic discourse on the environment possesses a strong characteristic of plurality. This may finally vindicate the preference of the ontology of assemblages made in the methodological part. In allusion to Deleuze and Guattari’s characterization of language, we may say that there is “a throng of dialects, patois, slangs, and specialized languages” (1987, 7) of the “Islamic environmentalism.” The Islamic



discourse on the environment presents a “rhizomatic” structure, permeating cultural, language, and doctrinal barriers. It is dispersed globally, disseminated, and circulated by heterogeneous groups of individual actors and by entering into communion with equally as heterogeneous assemblages of assemblages, ranging from academic institutions, media, governments, international organizations, NGOs, specialist networks, enthusiasts, and outlaws. Simultaneously, the discourse adopts motives and concepts from other discourses, such as Islamic, environmentalist, and the like. There is no authoritative version of it (although a couple of texts have been identified above as seminal in the proliferation of the discourse, these are typically not quoted nor memorialized except for a narrow circle of academic specialists), and everyone must thus decide for his preferred version of the discourse.

In this view, the initial example of the *Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change* can be finally viewed in a more fine-grained context: a sprout of a much more extensive and dispersed rhizomatic network that permeates contemporary Islam (or rather its parts), somewhat marginalized and under the threshold of broader public interest, but still present. Arguably, this diversity of the discourse—but also its “subliminal” character, i.e., the quality of remaining, in most cases, just the discourse without the ensuing political crises, revolutions, or violence, as well as without charismatic leaders and tightly-knit organizations, also renders it a subtle subject for study, evading easy and tabular scholarly scrutiny. It is, for example, hardly possible to account for all the occurrences of the discourse and cover all its language-specific variants, and not much easier to account for all the specific adaptations of the discourse, its modalities, and the nuances of the individual debates and arguments. This is, after all, characteristic of rhizomatic structures, growing organically in a decentralized way, without a single root or stem.

To address this diversity and systematize it in the following chapters, I will follow a path oriented by the key research questions specified earlier and focus on *history, context, and theory*. Eventually, I have chosen a strategy of addressing all of these in four individual chapters, each of which may be viewed as an examination of a particular *section* of what has been described as the rhizomatic network. Each expedition will then cover a specific *temporal* sample

of the discourse, *actors*, *genres*, and *framings* and a proposal of a particular theoretical or contextual *explanation*.

The third chapter will focus on the origins of the discourse, and the actors of interest will be a handful of individuals who have addressed the relationship between Islam and the environment earlier than most of the others and engaged in what can be viewed as an “intellectual debate” led in the shadow of the then novel notion of the environmental crisis. By that, I will also attempt to capture a primeval motive of the discourse that will be theorized as the *moral response* to the ecological crisis, which is apparent in most of the other expressions of the discourse. The fourth chapter will again begin with the relatively early stage of the discourse, even though it will follow the therein-identified links up to the present. I will focus on the role of the major institutions in the coining and dissemination of the discourse and demonstrate their relative importance, at least at this stage. Simultaneously, it will pose a question about the reason why the discourse was not eventually more widely adopted on the institutional level (i.e., by states and other policy-making bodies). The fifth chapter will focus on what seems to be characteristic, especially for the more recent phases of the discursive history of „Islam and the environment,“ comprising the discourse’s diversification and adoption by a greater variety of actors. A central actor will be the “activist” subculture, but other actor networks will be considered, too. The key theoretical question will be targeted at the characteristics of plurality and diversity—both in actors and expressions. As a productive explanation and useful theorization of this diversity, the concept of identity will be proposed. It will also be discussed how the discourse can fulfill other social functions other than signifying a moral position or enhancing social change. Finally, the sixth chapter will partly return to what this work has begun with and will address the Islamic discourse on the environment and the truth that is transmitted by it as an object of knowledge. In the first part, academicians and academic institutions will be shown to have played an important role in the proliferation of the discourse, especially through the promotion of the primordialist perspective. In the second, possibilities of further study of the “Islam and the environment” intersection will be discussed, and a case will be made for the broadening of the application of critical historical methods and the abandonment of primordialism. Although the inquiry will be

made on the basis of (mostly) English and, to a limited degree, Arabic and Persian sources, thus necessarily ignoring significant swaths of the discursive field, I believe that the eventual conceptual and historical overview will be in its significant aspects generalizable.

Still, before addressing this diversity and heterogeneity, It is necessary to make yet another detour and focus in more detail on what the whole discourse is connected by and what it has in common. This common linking point has already been exemplified at the beginning of this chapter as the idea that Islam commands the preservation of the environment and its balance and warns of its destruction. Indeed, this is the very basis of the *truth* that is widely shared within the discourse. I will now address this homogeneity in the understanding of how the Islamic “code” speaks to the issue of the environment as a *virtual catechism* and look into its content in some detail.

## 2.2 Homogeneity of the Discourse: The „Catechism“ of the Islamic Environmentalism

The previous part of this chapter has focused on the diversity of the discourse and its variance. Nevertheless, along with this, the discourse also displays a remarkable *homogeneity* in at least one aspect. There is a widely shared consensus that Islam is a “pro-environmental” religion that teaches and commands the protection and preservation of the natural environment and opposes environmentally harmful practices. Many of the texts included in this study speak about the severity of the global environmental crisis and imply that religion should not be indifferent toward the current situation. There is a widespread opinion among these authors that Islam *can* and *should* play a major positive role in environmental protection and conservation on a societal level. As already discussed, this idea is presented within the discourse as a particular *truth*, and this truth is underpinned and demonstrated—again in a way that has already been made apparent—by the quotations from the Islamic scriptures (this also makes it a part of the assemblage of Islam). The way these scriptures are interpreted and „translated“ to correspond to the current environmental concerns and themes is also remarkably homogeneous.

In what follows, I will theorize this homogeneity as a *virtual catechism* of Islamic environmentalism. In the first part of the chapter, I will first introduce this concept theoretically. In the second part, I will provide a detailed analysis of this catechism to show how it grounds the basic truth transmitted within the discourse in the scriptural authority, but also how the usage of the same motives need not necessarily result in identical conclusions and framings in individual instances.

## 2.2.1 The Concept of the Virtual Catechism

### 2.2.1.a *The Concept of Catechism in General*

The concept of “catechism” refers to a manual of religious instruction or a summary of religious doctrine. Historically, the term has its origin in Christianity, where such manuals were produced continuously from the times of the early Church, over the Reformation period (around which the term “catechism” finally became widely used), up to the present day, and across different denominations. Regardless of its origin and actual form (which necessarily need not follow the characteristic questions-answers structure popularized by Luther; cf. Sloyan 2003), the purpose of catechism as a genre is relatively clear: to instruct and educate (particularly lay or newcomer) followers of a given religious (or, for that matter, any ideologically or doctrinally defined; see below) association about the basic ideas, tenets and beliefs which are deemed obligatory or in some other regard essential in such association.

There are clearly two main objections regarding the application of the term in the Islamic context and also on the specific topic studied here. The first one is that catechism as a genre and instrument seems to be rather alien to Islam. This may be ascribed to the greater stress put on orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy and the different structure of authority, which tends to be more decentralized and generally lacks the character of a strictly defined association akin to the church. Accordingly, there is no easily recognizable tradition of producing “catechisms” in the Islamic context, even though parallels could perhaps be drawn in many cases, and, in fact, there are treatises that this term can reasonably label.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, proposing an Islamic “catechism” may evoke a false sense of doctrinal unity and consensus, which may not be the case. The second objection

---

21 For example the *‘İlm-i Hāl* literature from the Ottoman era (see Terzioğlu 2013) or the current publications like the already mentioned *The Key to Understanding Islam* by Abd al-Rahman al-Shiha which condensate a standardized, simplified and comprehensive version of doctrine translated in many different world languages and which even follows the question-answer pattern (al-Shiha’s book incidentally also contains the theme of the environment [see Sheha 2016, 58]). Occasionally, the concept of „catechism“ has been used in the Islamic context even explicitly, such as in the case of the *Concise Islamic Catechism* issued by the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*; see Soyman 1991).

then relates more immediately to the Islamic discourse on the environment. As claimed in the overview above, the discourse is not unified and does not represent a single movement or doctrinal posture. Correspondingly, conceiving a single catechism for the whole discourse seems problematic and unreal: it is especially not clear which one of the diverse texts that have been produced should represent such “catechism.” From a certain point of view, it seems that if something is characteristic of the Islamic discourse on the environment, it is that there is no single “catechism” that would be agreed upon and recalled by a movement that does not, strictly speaking, exist. Nevertheless, as I will now argue, the concept of catechism eventually presents the best possibility to capture the actual state of the discourse to the point and degree we use it, first, in a *metaphorical and figurative* sense, and, second, conceive of a *virtual* catechism.

#### 2.2.1.b      *The „Virtual Catechism“ on Islam and the Environment*

For the first, the metaphoric sense of catechism is relatively easy to imagine. It has already been presumed that “catechism” may be produced within any ideologically or doctrinally identified association. In this context, we may recall the *Communist Manifesto*, which was prepared initially by Engels as a “catechism” and followed the question-answer structure (see Engels [1847] 1925). Even though Marx and Engels subsequently dropped this form and adopted a different structure, the effective status of the *Manifesto* as a “catechism” (a means of catechizing in Communism) can hardly be disputed. Obviously, we could name many other examples of documents called “manifestos,” “declarations,” etc., functionally serving as catechisms or acquiring such roles throughout modern history. After all, there are also individual instances of texts that correspond well to the formal structure of catechism within the Islamic discourse on the environment (e.g., Khalid 1999; LifeMakers UK and IFEES 2008; Bin Muhammad, Shah-Kazemi, and Ahmed 2008; Shezad n.d.) even though the register is much broader and includes genres like essay, polemic, declaration and so on.

Nevertheless, to conceive of a single “environmental catechism” of Islam, another step must be taken. This comprises of transposing the term to

another, abstract level, where it does not refer more to a concrete piece of discourse but presents instead a descriptive category signifying a summary of tenets common to *all individual pronouncements within the discourse*—the implicit “articles” of faith or doctrine which though not being anywhere put together in an authoritative and uniform manner are still discernible. In other words, they comprise a typical pattern occurring within the discourse within reasonable limits of variance. In such case, we may speak about a *virtual* catechism—as despite that there is no *actual* single catechism, the level of homogeneity and consistency within the discourse enables us to see and define one (on the concepts of actuality and virtuality see DeLanda 2016, 72–74, 108–110). It is also in this sense that we may speak about “catechisms” of socialism, conservatism, liberalism, or neoliberalism obtained simply by putting together their constitutive recurrent signs appearing within the actual discourse or even by asking any of proponents of such ideologies a series of discriminatory questions,<sup>22</sup> and this is even though we may not dispose of a comprehensive catechism of any of them in the literal sense.

Indeed, to speak about such “catechism” is possible only under certain conditions, namely only if some *basic agreement* about the principles and tenets is reached so the catechism may be meaningfully defined. Obviously, this condition is not easily and often fulfilled within Islam. For example, if we speak about the Islamic attitude to state authority in the course of the 20th century, no such “catechism” could be easily defined because there is too much diversity of views (compare, for example, the radical Qutbian tradition of questioning the legitimacy of the post-colonial nation-state with the prevailing acquiescent posture towards it; see Enayat 2001, 78–101). The same could probably be said about the attitude towards gender questions and other similar problems.

Nevertheless, in the case of the Islamic discourse on the environment, as it has already been partly made apparent, there is no such fundamental discrepancy of views, but on the contrary—the Islamic discourse produces here a catechism which is in its elementary structure remarkably consistent and homogeneous. The observation of the presence of a “catechism” in the Islamic

---

<sup>22</sup> I adopt this figurative meaning of catechism from Václav Bělohradský who presents it as a basis of the classical-modern structuration of political space—one that is currently being replaced by the rule of „post-catechistic“ majorities in the European politics (see Bělohradský 2021, 77–94).

discourse is not surprising, and it is consistent with what other authors writing on Islam and the environment have observed. The academic literature on the topic, regardless of its concrete methodology, typically includes an overview of Islamic “principles” or “ideas” regarding the environment. So, for example, even critical authors like Karagiannis, who strikes a visibly skeptical note on Islamic environmentalism and points out its instrumentalization within the agenda of Islamist movements, still concedes that “Quran and the Hadiths have touched upon environmental issues” and that “Islam perceives the relationship between man and the nature as mutually complementary,” supporting his view by a list (if somewhat short and random) of characteristic examples from the tradition (Karagiannis 2015, 183). Some authors simply accept the “catechism” and reproduce it as homogeneous and undifferentiated (see, e.g., Sanniotis 2012; Kaminski 2018). More critical scholars, however, have noticed the interpretation of the Qur’an and the Hadith “through an environmental lens” (Hancock 2018, 54) may ultimately lead to different propositions (see *ibid.*, 54—68).<sup>23</sup> This may eventually provide an answer to an obvious critical question regarding the conceptualization itself: why operate with the arbitrary concept of “catechism” altogether when the same thing could be reasonably well described by other more established terms like “ideas,” “principles,” or, alternatively, “theology,” “ideology” and like?

The basic reason is that discerning the peculiar “catechism” of the Islamic discourse on the environment enables us to *differentiate* between various layers of the discourse. What is described here as a catechism does not exhaust the discourse and scarcely stands alone. Different ideas and even different principles may be derived from the shared “articles of faith.” In other words, catechism, in its rigidity, paradoxically still allows for doctrinal flexibility on different levels and may itself be interpreted to different ends. Moreover, it must be stressed here again that the catechism is merely *virtual*. The homogeneity thus occurs only virtually and at the “vanishing point” and coexists with the *variance* in the selection, adaptation, and interpretation of the concrete motives. At this place, I will thus start from the shared motives and commonalities, which will finally enable me to proceed to, at first, subtle and then more tangible differences. The

---

<sup>23</sup> Still, Hancock, like others, perceives it necessary to list the basic motives of the catechism, attesting to its saliency for the understanding of the discourse.



*limits* of the catechism will thus be rendered visible, and eventually, a question will be asked whether the catechism may be changed or overcome (and some attempts in this direction will be discussed, too).

Finally, it is useful to stress that the conceptualization of the homogeneity of the discourse as the virtual “catechism” ultimately leaves the question about the origin and source of this homogeneity open. Is it a product of the motives that are inherent in the Islamic revelation? Or is it a product of the successive construction, circulation, and dissemination of particular, and by no means definitive interpretations, which may still be reassessed in the future? I will return to some of these questions later (see 6.2).

### **2.2.2 The Structure of the Catechism and its Themes**

Obviously, the most general trait of the Islamic „environmental catechism“ is that it can exist only in relation to an even broader virtual catechism or “code,” the Islamic one as such. In effect, its emergence thus means adaptation of particular motives and elements of this broader code and worldview. Such a derivation is, arguably, made easier by the fact that the Islamic “worldview” (probably like any other religious one) is by itself fairly comprehensive. As Weber has noticed, it is principal for the religious worldview<sup>24</sup> that it attributes a particular “systematic and coherent” meaning to the world, to the reality as a whole, which concerns both individual and total, both “social and cosmic events.” The whole world is then seen as a “meaningful ordered totality” (Weber 1965, 59). The Islamic view of this ordered whole (or the Islamic „ontology“ as it may be categorized) may be summarized in various different ways. Yet one of them may perhaps go as follows: Man finds himself in a world that was created by God, who is transcendent to it. Man is a part of this creation and is allotted a limited time on the earth before he dies, only to await his resurrection on the final day of the world (*yawm al-dīn*). Man is exhorted to surrender to God’s will (as denoted by the very term *Islām*), particularly in two specific areas: performing the prescribed rituals (*‘ibāda*) and living in accordance with the God’s law (*sharī‘a*).

---

<sup>24</sup> Weber attributes this characteristic exclusively to „ethical“ religious traditions, which is though disputable.

He will be rewarded for this surrender (or the failure to surrender) in the afterworld (*āchira*) by an eternal residence either in fire or in the garden. Finally, the definitive version of the guidance (*hudā'*) for man and the „distinction“ (*furqān*) between good and bad, which specifies God’s will and law for man, occurs in the Qur’an as it has been revealed by God to the prophet Muhammad (for different representations of these tenets one may compare two comprehensive treatments different both in form, target audience and doctrinal underleanings; see Ash-Sheha 2016; Rahman 1989). Where can the “environment” be found in this scheme of things? Before proceeding towards concrete examples, it is useful to briefly focus on the general process of conceptualization.

### 2.2.2.a Finding the „Environment“ in the Tradition and Matching the Concepts

The first that is necessary to take into consideration is that the term (and one may argue that also the concept of) “environment” (Ar. *bī'a*) does not occur in the Qur’an. The same holds for its more traditional and vague substitute, “nature” (Ar. *ṭabī'a*, introduced into Islam only with the reception of the Greek peripatetic philosophy and its central concept of *physis*; see, e.g., Adıgüzel 2018).<sup>25</sup> From this follows but one significant consequence: the “environment” (or “nature” for that matter) must be somehow identified in the scriptural conceptual framework, with possibly various Islamic terms and concepts that may be mobilized to parallel it

<sup>25</sup> One must disagree here with Gade, who erroneously claims that *al-bī'a* „appears few times in the Qur’an“ (2019, 85). This is obviously not the case, as Gade apparently (from the examples used by her; see *ibid.*) has on her mind derivatives from the same consonantal root (BW') in the form of transitive or intransitive verbs *baww'a* or *tabaww'a* (to settle or to be settled in an ordinary sense of the word). The usage of these semantically related verbal forms though, cannot be mistaken for the usage of a highly abstract term that *al-bī'a* definitely represents and which, to a certain degree, only incidentally derives from the same root (one can document this on the fact that there has been a competing Arabic word for the “environment,” *muḥīt*, still recalled by some authors, and also figuring in the Persian word for the “environment,” *moḥīt-e zīst*). The fact that the Qur’an does not employ such an abstract term (the same holds for *al-ṭabī'a*) for the description of the mundane world is certainly by itself important and indicative of a particular conceptual and semantic structure that should not be erased. One may point to the fact that even the authors who are well versed in the Arabic language (e.g. because they are native speakers of it) do not claim that *al-bī'a* would be *literally* present in the Qur’an (Qaradawi to whom al-Gade refers only exposes the etymology of the concept in relation to the Qur’anic occurrences of the BW' consonantal root — as it is after all not unusual in the traditional discourse [cf Qaradawi 2001, 12]). Ignoring this difference means ignoring the whole interpretative *process* through which the “environment” would have been rendered indigenous to the Islamic worldview.

(and this is even if we put aside that the “environment” itself a variable and contested concept). In this situation, the bare minimum of the Islamic environmental catechism is the shared conviction that the concept of the “environment” presents a meaningful category in Islam, that it is comprehensively, meaningfully, and adequately represented in the Islamic conceptual framework (i.e., particularly in the Qur’an) in an unequivocal way (i.e., its representation is not mere speculation or construction) and, not least, that this representation, in its adequateness, transmits a meaning that is somehow important (i.e., represents a truth, guiding humans in their interaction with the world and particularly with ecological problems, distinct from different truths or falsities).

Without much hesitation, this conviction may be viewed as truly universal, shared among all the speakers of the discourse (and as such also contrasted to potential antithetic positions, e.g., that there is no unequivocal representation of the environment in the Qur’an, or that “the environment,” perhaps together with “ecological problems,” does not present a meaningful category in the context of the Qur’anic message). Yet what exactly does the “environment” represent? Here, the question becomes more complicated. Still, an acceptable generalization may be that for most of the authors, the “environment” roughly corresponds to its usual “secular” meaning: it comprises the earthly animate and inanimate nature (i.e., plants, animals, the atmosphere, water and so on) in the midst of which man finds himself and upon which he to various degrees depends by his survival and well-being. Another generalization is that this nature, thought of as the environment, is thought of as essentially *alterable*. Even though being God’s creation, the environment is open to change by human agency, up to the point that it can be changed substantially, with its life-sustaining capacities severely hampered. Obviously, in a universe where God’s creation is immune from human intervention, the “environmentalist” interpretation of Islam would not make sense. The notion of the alterable environment, implicit already in the acknowledgment of the fact of the environmental change and environmental problems, must be thus seen as another essential “article of faith” (and simultaneously as a crucial influence of environmentalism on Islam; see Chapter 3).

Nonetheless, once we try to specify the concept of the “environment” within the catechism further through its intrinsic qualities (i.e., its composition, laws that govern its functioning, and its most acute problems), we may observe two things: First, the intrinsic qualities of the environment and its concrete “substantial” definition do not figure in the Islamic texts on the environment as a primary area of concern. Second, as far as they are represented, they need not necessarily be consistent and may more or less differ among individual authors. Yet if the situation is this way, a logical question arises: how can a unified “environmental catechism” exist if there is no agreement upon the substantial definition of the “environment”?

The answer is that the Muslim authors who engage in articulating and circulating this catechism focus predominantly on the *extrinsic* characteristics of the environment, i.e., those characteristics that depend on its relationships to other entities, its value vis-a-vis them, and its ability to affect or be affected. These are, for example, that the environment is *created* by God and derives its innate qualities from God, that the environment has a particular *value* for man (this may be the utility value, or simply the quality of being God’s creation and thus pointing towards God as its creator), that man is responsible for his actions before God and this responsibility extends to his relating to and treatment of the environment.

Accordingly, the majority of terms that are incorporated into the Islamic environmental catechism are those that attribute some general *meaning* and *value* to the constitutive parts of what is conceived of as the “environment.” This connection is made through a series of assignments and attributions of meaning to concrete concepts like “creation” (*chalq*), “earth” (*arḍ*), “water” (*mā’*), as well as many other parts of animate and inanimate nature that establish and sustain it. This attribution naturally occurs on both sides of the equation. A particular meaning is attributed both to the “environment” and to Islamic concepts. As far as such a parallel is drawn, a modification in meaning may also occur on both sides. From this, it follows that while the Islamic concepts can be “environmentalized” (which is the more obvious case), the “environment” may also be “Islamicized” and eventually understood differently than in the secular context. In this regard,

the intricacy of the terms “environment” and “nature” must also be taken into due consideration.

Nonetheless, as already pointed out, the situation is, fortunately, in most of the cases not so complicated as Muslim authors take the environment as what it most often represents in the environmentalist discourse: the singular whole of nature which is thought in its *relational* aspect vis-a-vis the human condition and agency with particular stress on the possibility of being altered by this agency (i.e., nature which surrounds us, influences us, but crucially is also *affected* by us; cf. Glacken 1967, vii-viii; Macnaghten and Urry 1998, 8; see also the discussion in 3.1.2.c). This concept is then integrated with the broader framework of the Qur’anic “ontology” that addresses the questions of man, universe, time, and being in its own conceptual framework and with broader concerns. As will be demonstrated throughout the following chapters, this approach provides the Islamic environmental “catechism” with coherence and a measure of persuasiveness but is also sufficiently vague to be adapted to a variety of concrete claims. This variability will also be evident in the themes discussed in the following section.

### 2.2.2.b *Representations of Nature in the Qur’an*

Representations of what can be considered natural phenomena are manifold and frequent in the Qur’an. Of these, some play a more important role in the catechism. Specifically, they are those corresponding to the idea of “nature” and “environment” standing as an independent entity against the human and social. This concept is, as it was noted, however, rather alien to the Qur’anic worldview, and there is no such thing as a single idea of nature that can be easily identified. It has to be “assembled” from the mentions scattered throughout the text, which vary in content and meaning.

The natural world as such is most generally represented as a part of the “creation” (*khalq*), which, however, has a much broader meaning. More concretely, the general framework of the natural world may be identified with the couple of the heaven(s) (*samā’* or *samāwāt*) and earth (*arḍ*), which appears in the

verses speaking about the “creation of the heavens and earth” (e.g., 2:164, see also below) or God as the “originator (*badī*) of the heavens and the earth“ (e.g., 2:117).<sup>26</sup> By that, a basic location of the „environment“ in the whole structure of the Qur’anic cosmology is established. The framework of the heaven and earth,<sup>27</sup> as we will see, has furthermore its significance as a signifier of the environment in statements of more distinct meaning attributing given properties and values to the natural world and in ethical statements which are otherwise rather general but the mention especially of earth enables their relation to the “environmental” phenomena. In a space bounded by this broad framework, a more concrete world of earthly nature appears, consisting of inanimate nature, vegetation, and living creatures. Its descriptions are relatively frequent and rich, as can be seen in the following verse from surat *al-Baqara*:

In the creation of the heavens and earth; in the alternation of night and day; in the ships that sail the seas with that which benefits people; in the water which God sends down from the sky to give life to the earth when it has been barren, scattering all kinds of creatures over it; in the changing of the winds and clouds that run their appointed courses between the sky and earth: there are signs in all these for a people who use their minds (2:164).

The verse presents an array of natural phenomena embedded in the framework of the creation of the heavens and earth. Astronomical processes are included, as well as “the winds and clouds” and life-giving rain. Besides that, ships are mentioned “with that which benefits people” (*bi-mā yanfa ‘u al-nās*), and the whole statement is framed as a “signs for a people who use their minds.” All this has an important ethical meaning, which I will comment on below. Here, I will focus on the “descriptive” dimension of the Qur’anic text. For it, the mention of rain has a special significance. In fact, we find more instances of it. This is one of the most typical from surat *al-An ‘ām*:

And it is He who sends down rain from the sky, and We produce thereby the growth of all things. We produce from it greenery from which We produce grains arranged in layers. And from the palm trees - of its emerging fruit are clusters hanging low. And gardens of grapevines and olives and pomegranates, similar yet varied. Look at

<sup>26</sup> It is necessary to note that still, „heavens“ denote two meanings: both the physical and the transcendent. The transcendent usually stays in the background in environmental discussions. See Jarrar 2006; Peterson 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Both heaven (*samā’*) and heavens (*samāwāt*) appear approximately three hundred times in the Qur’an, and earth (*arḍ*) is even more frequent; often, they stand in couples. Of these, only a fraction enter the environmental discourse.

its fruit when it yields and its ripening. Indeed in that are signs for a people who believe. (6:99)

Here, similarly to the previous example, the elements of nature are clustered and merged into one image. We may call it an „earth revival“ image. Water is sent from the sky as a source of growth of plants on the earth (sometimes described as “dead”), resulting in a miraculous scene with sprouting of vegetation described in detail and vividly (similarly in 6:141, 13:4 16:10–11, 27:60, 36:33–35, 50:7–11, 80:24–32). In other instances, the „growth of plants“ is mentioned more briefly, but other phenomena appear: rivers (see also 13:3, 14:32, 16:15), sea (2:146, 14:32, 17:70, 45:12, 16:14), astronomical processes (2:146, 14:32–34, 71:15–20), mountains (13:3), wind and clouds (2:164, 7:57), cattle and other creatures (16:10, 32:27, 79:30–32, 80:24–32). Outstanding is verse 45 of the surat *al-Nūr*, which links water to the creation of animals:

God has created every creature from water. And of them are those that move on their bellies, and of them are those that walk on two legs, and of them are those that walk on four. Allah creates what He wills. Indeed, Allah is over all things competent (24:45).

Other elements of nature stand separately from these clusters and are sometimes cited in the environmental context, e.g., bees (16:68–69), birds (6:38; 24:41; 27:16) ants (27:18), livestock (16:3–8, 16:66, 16:18, 36:71–73) or mountains, as in surat *al-Anbiyā'*: „And We placed within the earth firmly set mountains, lest it should shift with them“ (see also 16:15, 41:30). Also the earth and heaven itself are captured in an “environmental” sense, created *for* the man as a place for living and described by corresponding tropes: „[He] who made for you the earth a bed (*firāsh*) and the sky a ceiling (*binā'*)“ (2:22). Similarly it is referred to the earth as the „cradle“ (*mahd*, 43:10), „carpet“ or „expanse“ (*bisāṭ*, 15:19) „resting place“ (*mihād*, 78:6, see also 10:101), or as created “for creatures” (*li-l-anām*, 55:10). As it is noted by several authors, some 30 suras have some kind of natural phenomena in their title (see, e.g., Haq 2001, 116; Abdul-Matin 2010, 90; Qaradawi 2001, 54). Finally, there are also remarkable indications in the Qur'an, which point out that the “list” is not exhausting and that there are other parts of creation unmentioned and unknown to man:

Exalted is He who created all pairs - from what the earth grows and from themselves and from that which they do not know. (36:36)

We could obviously find many other instances of mentions of the elements of nature in the Qur'an (e.g., the apocalyptic verses), but they are usually of lesser significance in the context of the environmental discourse.<sup>28</sup> This is probably because it is in the cited ones where "nature" stands independently as a primary point of reference, and various meanings are attributed to it. We will deal with these meanings in detail soon, but interestingly, the representation and occurrence of nature in the Qur'an is not by itself without significance for the Islamic environmental discourse. For some of the authors, the comprehensive and sometimes rich and vivid representation of the natural world in the Qur'an serves as a point of departure for any further contemplation. It demonstrates that Islamic cosmology is integral and that revelation does not neglect nature and the environment, which is highly esteemed and plays an important role in God's purposes. This makes any further argumentation, especially that which tends to generalize and expand rather narrow ethical tenets to the environmental issues, more plausible and, indeed, the connection between Islam and the environment logical. This attitude is typical, especially for more conservative and traditional scholars striving to articulate a systematic "holistic" approach to the topic based solely or primarily on Islamic sources, though not only for them (see Shirazi 2000, 21; Qaradawi 2001, 12–21; Shihata 2001, 10–14; ISESCO 2002a, 57–60; see also 5.1.2).

In a different manner, the representations of nature in the Qur'an are sometimes compared to modern scientific conceptualizations of the environment. Description of its various elements may be interpreted as corresponding to or anticipating the classification of its parts by modern science (hydrosphere, atmosphere, biosphere), description of relations between species, and concept of biodiversity (Qaradawi 2001, 15–18; ISESCO 2002a, 56–60; 69–72). Some authors stress only the general accord between scientific and Qur'anic representation of nature (Abdul-Matin 2010, 4), while others may go further to claim that Qur'an contains a kind of "primordial" ecological knowledge, which was only later established by modern science and that the contemporary environmentalism is therefore not new (ISESCO 2002a, 82–83; Shihata 2001, 12;

---

<sup>28</sup> This fact is also severely criticized by Gade who argues for the centrality of the apocalyptic imageries of nature for the truly integral Muslim environmental worldview (cf. 2019, 81, 110–113).



Qaradawi 2001, 20).<sup>29</sup> This is closely linked to the proposition that a scientifically sound description of the natural world purportedly represented in the Qur'an is proof of its divinity, a tradition established mainly by the French physician Maurice Bucaille (see 1995). However, not all the authors engage in such discussions, and many of them base their propositions rather on the more general or symbolic meaning of nature in the plain of God's creation (e.g., Nasr [1968] 1990; 1996).<sup>30</sup>

Anyway, nature, or better to say, its elements, which we will follow further on, are not treated in the Qur'an, as it was already noted, as an „objective“ entity free of value. On the contrary, they are woven into the whole ethical-cosmological system of meaning, and specific values are attributed to them. For many, the core of the Qur'anic imagination of the environment lies in this very system of meaning, values, and norms.

### 2.2.2.c *Nature Balanced and Perfected*

We may begin with the evaluative statements attributing distinct properties or value to nature or the elements that signify the natural world. One of these properties is the state of creation as being balanced and perfected. This is denoted by the root WZN:

And the earth – We have spread it and cast therein firmly set mountains and caused to grow therein of every well-balanced thing (*min kulli shay' mawzūn*) (15:19) / And the heaven He raised and imposed the balance (*waḍa'a al-mīzān*); That you not transgress within the balance (*lā taṭghū fī al-mīzān*) (55:7–8).

Other terms interpreted as denoting the perfected state are derived from the root QDR:

Verily, we have created all things in due measure (*bi qadar*) (54:49) /  
We have sent down rain from the sky in measure (*bi qadar*) (23:18) /  
Allah knows what every female carries and what the wombs lose or

<sup>29</sup> In this regard, the authors of the ISESCO brochure mention notions of inter- or transdisciplinarity and the conception of integral environmental science, i.e., a „single science“ of nature (and creation) which is purportedly included in the Qur'an, too (ISESCO 2002a, 83–84).

<sup>30</sup> S. H. Nasr is even highly critical of the “totalitarian claims” of modern science (Nasr 1996, 5) applied in a positivist manner and puts it in contrast to more profound and complex religious or philosophical views of reality (Nasr [1968] 1990, 25–30) and points out the “submission” to the scientific views caused by “a sense of inferiority and fear” before it (30; see also 3.2.1).

exceed. And everything with Him is by due measure (*bi miqdār*) (13:8).

In both cases, both the root and the words derived from it cover a broad semantic field. *Mīzān* denotes both „balance“ and „scales“ in the basic distinction. The word *qadar* (see also 15:21) is even much more ambiguous, with „measure“ being by no means its sole meaning, and stands along the semantic contents of „predestination“ or „preordainment“ (with the word often interpreted and even translated in other languages this way). As it is apparent, especially in the case of the important cited passage of surat *al-Raḥmān* (55:7–8), the broader framework of nature comes into play. At least partly given that the whole passage is set in the context of “raising of the Heaven” (*wa al-samā’ rafa’ahā*), the following ambiguous formulation about the “imposition of balance” and especially the admonition not to “transgress within the balance,” which may be interpreted, and often is, as concerning rather righteousness in weighing (see the following verse 55:9, clear in this respect), explained directly in “environmental” sense. This is also the case with other statements, where only those marked by the presence of some “natural” context (often *arḍ* and *samā’*) are usually quoted.

Apart from possessing due “balance“ and „measure,“ the creation is also described as perfected and flawless. First, negatively:

You do not see in the creation of the Most Merciful any inconsistency (*tafāwut*). So return vision [to the sky]; do you see any breaks (*min quṭūr*)? (67:3)

And also positively:

Who perfected (*aḥsana*) everything which He created. (32:7) / Allah, who perfected (*atqana*) all things. (27:88)

Besides that, sometimes, formulations stating that God „has enumerated all things in number (*aḥṣā kulla shay’ adadan*)“ (72:28; similarly 78:29) are cited, though links to “nature” are lacking. Finally, the well-known verse of surat *Nūh* is interpreted in a similar sense with the word *fiṭra* denoting the balanced and perfected initial state of creation (though the natural world is not included specifically):

So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth. [Adhere to] the *fiṭra* of Allah upon which He has created people. No change should there be in the creation of Allah. That is the correct religion,

but most of the people do not know (30:30).

For the contemporary “environmental“ interpretations of Islam, the fact that the creation is described as balanced and perfected in the Qur’an holds importance similar to that which the concept of balance carries in whole modern environmental thinking.<sup>31</sup> Both balance and perfection point to the original state of the world as created by God, disruptions of which must result from human intrusion and environmentally unsound activity. Balance and “measure” may be equated with or interpreted in close relation to rational and scientific images of nature as possessing due proportions suitable for humans and abiding by laws of nature or to the state of ecological balance and mutual harmony between organisms (see ISESCO 2002a, 62–64; Qaradawi 2001, 15–18), or more specific issues as the composition of atmosphere (Parvaiz 2015, 180–181; Abdul-Matin 2010, 11–12), the climatic balance of the planet (IFEES 2015, 1.3), or even to the balance as a principle of the biological pest control – substituting harmful usage of pesticides which “destroy the natural balance” (ISESCO 2002a, 63). Or, it may be viewed differently as the all-embracing metaphysical principle on which diverse domains of worldly existence are partaking (Nasr 1990, 128–129).

In any case, the encroachment of this balance (whatever it may be) is perceived as negative and discouraged. Nature must be treated so that its original perfected state would not be harmed. This may be achieved by abstaining from activities evidenced as harmful or projecting the principle of balance to the human conduct itself (Abdul-Matin 2010, 11–12). The encroachment concerns not just the quantity but also the quality, so, e.g., the manipulations with the genome may be discouraged on this basis (Parvaiz 2003, 393–401). The concept of *fitra* (despite its meaning being complicated and sometimes contested [see e.g. Gade 2019, 84]) is used in similar way, indicating disapproval of the encroachment of the primeval state of the natural world (Abdul-Matin 2010, 12; IFEES 2015, 2.4; Qaradawi 2001, 22, 222-224; Masri 1992, 22) and in some cases constituting the

---

<sup>31</sup> It has both its strict scientific meaning and broader meaning linked to ethics. Apart from the role that this concept plays in ecology as a science where it is linked to the concept of ecosystem (Krebs 2008, 339–394) we can find it in a broader sense as a virtual ethical concept denoting the harmonious coexistence of man with nature in most of the mainstream environmentalist thinking (with the ecological crisis constantly threatening this harmony already from the Carson's [2002] and others' early popular environmentalist writings).

main underlying motive in argumentation, supplementing the more widespread concept of *mīzān* (see Chishti 2003, 76–78).

However, the concept of balance shares with its secular counterpart its indeterminateness. Where are the limits of the acceptable human intervention in the natural order if humans, with their culture and economy, always and by necessity to some degree alter it? I will return to this question after discussing the following theme.

#### 2.2.2.d *Nature beneficial*

The second notion of natural phenomena in the Qur'an is more relational than the previous one. It connects nature to humans, to the benefit of whom God created it. Such a notion is by no means scarce in the Qur'an. It is widespread and connected to the crucial motive of God's mercy and compassion towards man. Most of the images of "revival" (see above) are framed this way, as in 2:22, where the term *rizq*, i.e., „provision“ is used (see also 50:11), or 79:32 and 80:32, where *matā'* („provision“) is used, or 2:164, where it is referred to „benefiting“ (using the verb *naḥa'a*) men. In 14:34, it is referred to „bounties“ (*ni'am*, sg. *ni'ma*), which cannot be enumerated (*lā tuḥṣūhā*),<sup>32</sup> and in 25:48, the winds (linked to the sending of water) usher God's mercy (*raḥma*). In other verses, the benefit is denoted by referring to food and sustenance (by the root 'KL in 6:141, 10:24, 13:4, 32:27, 36:33-35; or Ṭ'M in 80:24), or simply by preposition *li*, i.e., *lakum*, „for you“ (27:60; see also the verses describing the earth as a „cradle“ and “carpet” above).

Several of these formulations appear in surat *al-Naḥl*, outstanding in this whole context, so that we can add it to the list of „semantic clusters“ related to the environmental discourse. Here, the creation of the heavens and earth is described (verse 3), then that of man (verse 4), and then that of livestock, horses, mules, and donkeys serving man's benefit in various ways (among them by its beauty, verses 5–8). In what follows, a brief version of the image of “revival” is included, with the stress on the benefit and utility of what was sent (verses 10, 11). After that, day and night and celestial bodies are mentioned (verse 12): the sea, providing

---

<sup>32</sup> Same formulation appears in 16:18.

man with meat and ornaments and carrying ships (verse 14); mountains, rivers, and roads (verse 15); landmarks and stars as means of navigation (verse 16). The whole discussed passage is ended by the stipulation that the bounties (*ni'am*) of God cannot be enumerated (verse 18). Twice, formulation *sakhkhara lakum* („he has subjected to you“) appears, regarding, first, „day and night“ and sea (verses 12, 14). We can find this formulation in a stronger sense also, e.g., in surat *Luqmān*:

Have you not seen that Allah has subjected to you (*sakhkhara lakum*) whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, and He has conferred upon you His favors (*asbagha 'alaykum ni'amahu*), outward and inward. (31:20)<sup>33</sup>

What God subjects to himself (e.g., *sakhkhara al-shams wa-l-qamar*, „subjected to Him the sun and the moon“; 16:12), he subjects, therefore, partly also to man. Other identical or similar statements are scattered throughout the Qur'anic text. Various verses refer to particular of these provisions and blessings as milk (16:66), „intoxicant“ (16:67), honey (16:68–69), „tents from the hides of the animals“ and „garments“ (16:80–81), iron (57:25), pearls and coral (55:22) etc. Of other terms used to denote blessings, *ma'āyish* („appointment of provisions, “7:10, 15:20) *al-ṭayyibāt* („the good things, “17:70, 40:46) or *āla'ā'* („favors“ 7:74, 55:24) are used.

This delineation of nature as a „blessing, “as a useful thing for man's benefit, and even „subjected to“ him plays a more ambiguous role than other notions. Obviously, it cannot be linked to the “conservationist“ ethics so straightforwardly. We can take as an example the stance of al-Qaradawi, who comments on these motives most extensively. On the one hand, he does not differ from others in stipulating that human activity has to be limited and subjected to rules. On the other, he claims that the blessings are, in fact, undepletable (since innumerable) if used with adequate gratefulness (*shukr*) to God and that they may even be aggrandized by human action (Qaradawi 2001, 32–35). And still a couple of other authors express a positive stance towards economic activities on this basis (see, e.g., Ba Kader et al. 1983, 14; Shihata 2001, 49–50; Izzi Deen 1990, 145–146).

---

<sup>33</sup> See also: 14:32–33, or 22:36–37.

This notion, however, is sporadic. Others, commenting on the „bounties“ of nature, stress the limitations much more, drawing on the motives of „measure,“ „balance,“ and „enumeration,“ standing in contrast to „innumerability“ (ISESCO 2002a, 64–69; 78–82; 84–85), or connect the problem to the issue of distribution, so that the resources are considered neither undepletable, nor too limited, but unjustly monopolized by some, which is the main root of their depletion (Parvaiz 2015, 177–180; see also Abdul-Matin 2010, 9–11). From yet a different perspective, the notion of the plentitude of “bounties” (as they have been given by God) may be contrasted with the idea of lack or scarcity fuelling the ever-growing desire and demand (Abdul-Matin 2010, 27). In a creative and poetic way, the energy from the sun and wind („energy from heaven“), which can be harnessed for renewables, is seen as a blessing from God, bringing the solution to the destruction stemming from the usage of fossil fuels extracted from the ground, i.e., the „energy from hell“ (Abdul-Matin 2010, 75–76; 90–95).<sup>34</sup> Other authors carefully contest the interpretation that the „subjection“ of the natural world to man means its subservience in any sense (Haq 2015, 150–151).<sup>35</sup>

The concept of nature as a “blessing” inevitably stands in tension with the concept of balance and perfected initial condition of the creation. Although there is generally a consensus that human activity, even if not illegitimate by itself, has to be limited and developed wisely so that the „blessings“ of nature would not be destroyed, the character of such a limit is unclear. Al-Qaradawi's „civilizing“ attitude (and perhaps also the actual environmental history of many parts of the Muslim world during the pre-modern and modern era) shows us that the motive of nature subservient to man and the statements encouraging its utilization may eventually leave these limitations rather loose. In any case, the balance between human needs and the preservation of nature is searched for in complicated dilemmas reflecting more or less those present in environmentalism in general. Although nature, in its created state, and by its very relation to God and various properties and meanings attributed to it (see also the following two sections), may be at times „sacralized“ in modern ecological interpretation of Islam (Nasr [1968] 1990, 21; Abdul-Matin 2010, 1), the result does not very often

---

<sup>34</sup> Surat *al-Shams* and verse 30:46 (mentioning the wind) are cited as an additional inspiration.

<sup>35</sup> For the thorough critical review of the concept of *taskhīr* see Tlili (2012, 92–115).

lead up to radical stance disapproving human intrusion into nature to a big extent.<sup>36</sup>

#### 2.2.2.e *Nature as a value per se*

Among the attributes assigned to nature in the Qur'an, an important role is played by what may be interpreted as the notion of its stand-alone value. Prominent in this context is the following verse from the surat *al-An'ām*, one of the most frequently quoted in the environmental context:

And there is no creature on the earth or bird that flies with its wings except communities like you (*umam amthālukum*) (6:38).

Here, “creatures,” and more specifically birds, are equated with the notion of *umma* (nation or community)<sup>37</sup> and indirectly with mankind (*amthālukum*, „like you”). This is probably also the strongest notion of nature's intrinsic value and autonomy present in the Qur'an. Other quoted verses state that the „heavens and the earth“ were not created „in play (*lā'iban*)“ (38:70) or, similarly, that the creation is not „without purpose (*bā'il*)“ (3:191)—on the contrary, it is created „in truth (*bi-l-ḥaqq*)“ (10:5, 16:3, 46:3).

We can class into this category also verses that credit nature with the quality of beauty, as in one of the images of “revival“ in surat *Yūnis*, in which the earth „has taken on its adornment (*akhadhat zuchrufahā*) and is beautified (*izzayyanat*)“ (10:24). Beauty is also attributed to the celestial constellations „made beautiful for beholders (*zayyanāhā li-l-nāẓirīn*)“ by God (15:16). Other expressions as *jamāl* (beauty) or *bahja* (loveliness) are used for camels or gardens (16:5, 27:60, 50:7) and we can include also the statement, that God „perfected (*aḥsana*) everything which He created“ (32:7), which denotes both beauty and perfection.

Though rare, verses carrying this notion are used in formulations of the contemporary Islamic environmental discourse to stress that the Qur'anic revelation is not oblivious to nature's intrinsic value, which resonates with the

---

<sup>36</sup> This is with a few exceptions. Arguably, Nasr is close to such radical interpretations, viewing the „desacralization“ of nature is one of main themes (see e.g. 1996, 3; see also Eaton 1998; IFEEES 2015, sec. 3).

<sup>37</sup> Bearing strong positive connotations since it is commonly used to refer to the Muslim community as a whole, stressing its unity and solidarity against internal feuds and divisions.

debate on anthropocentrism and with similar notions associated with secular environmentalism as various streams of protectionism, animal rights defense etc. The 6:38 verse is most frequently cited and included in almost all analyzed texts in a way discouraging acts threatening and damaging the natural environment and promoting its preservation and protection of species (see, e.g., IFESS 2015, art. 2.6; Qaradawi 2001, 92; many other examples could be stated). The verses stressing the purposefulness of the creation may be linked to a (purportedly) scientific observation that everything in ecosystems possesses a purpose (ISESCO 2002a, 73–78). Mentioning beauty is rather rare but present too (Qaradawi 2001, 35–37; 59–60; Shihata 2001, 45–48). The notion that the universe was created „in truth“ serves as an impetus to preserve it (see, e.g., IFEEES 2015, art. 2.1).

#### 2.2.2.f *Nature as a symbol*

Whereas in the aforementioned framings, the existence of nature as, to some degree, an „independent“ entity carrying specific qualities or value was accentuated, the Qur’an also frequently refers to the elements of nature as “signs“ (*āyāt*, sg. *āya*), i.e., by the term that normally denotes the Qur’anic verses themselves and signifies the way by which God is addressing of the mankind. Nature is thus rendered virtually as a symbol, standing in the midst of the crucial ethical relation between man and God. Frequently, the “creation of the heavens and the earth” is categorized in this way, e.g., as “signs for those of understanding (*āyāt li-uwlī al-albāb*)” (3:190). We can find other examples of this kind.<sup>38</sup> Notably, the images of “revival” constitute signs (*āyāt*) for believers as in 6:99, 13:4, and 36:33, as well as the „blessings” from God, sustenance and pasture, which are “signs for those of intelligence (*li-uwlī al-nuhayā*)” (20:54). Apart from that, we can mention here also the verses reminding the addressees of the revelation to pay attention to the natural world, which are also cited in this context, e.g., in the surat *al-Shu‘arā*: “Did they not look at the earth (*a-wa-lam yaraw ilā al-ard*) [...]?” (26:7).<sup>39</sup>

Interpretation of this theme varies. Generally, it is used to strengthen the notion of the importance attributed to nature in God's aims and enhance the

<sup>38</sup> See 2:164, 10:5, 10:101.

<sup>39</sup> See also: 2:164, 3:190, 6:99, 10:5, 10:24, 10:101, 13:4, 16:69, 16:67, 16:11–13, 41:39, 45:13.



interest in it, including its preservation. It plays an important role in addressing human conscience and morality and arguing for a close emotional relation to the natural world, resembling that towards God himself and his revelation. It is thus proposed that while looking at nature or thinking about it, man should always be reminded of its singularity and ponder over it (see, e.g., Abdul-Matin 2010, 6–7; ISESCO 2002a, 72–73). Nature, which “cannot explain its own being”, points to the transcendent. It is an “emblem of God” (Haq 2001, 146), reflecting his „sacredness, beauty and power” (Yaseen 2014, 132). *Āyāt* equated to the revelation, must not be destroyed<sup>40</sup> as, e.g., during the extraction of lignite wherein whole parts of the landscape disappear in the process (Abdul-Matin 2010, 86).

### 2.2.2.g God's Sovereignty over the Creation and Nature

In reviewing the following motives, we slowly move from the focus on nature itself to the more general structure of the ethical relationships ingrained in the Qur’anic revelation. In that, God may be viewed as the “absolute possessor,” “unquestioned commander,” and “merciful sustainer” of the universe (Rahman 1989, 65). This also delineates his position towards nature and man, which we may conceive as a position of sovereignty. God's sovereignty over the creation and nature is stated in many verses explicitly and straightforwardly, as in surat *Āl ‘Imrān*: “And to Allah belongs the dominion (*mulk*) of the heavens and the earth” (3:189). The notion of “dominion,” expressed by the word *mulk*<sup>41</sup> is derived from the root M-L-K, which in Arabic denotes both dominance and ownership, with important implications for environmentalist interpretations (see below). This aspect is supported by other formulations where the possession is expressed by the preposition *li-* or where the theme of inheritance is mentioned. Both are the case in the following verse of surat *al-A‘rāf*: “Indeed, the earth belongs to Allah (*al-arḍ li- llāh*). He causes to inherit it (*yūrithuhā*) whom He wills of His servants” (7:128). In another verse, it is stated that „we are the Inheritors (*naḥnu al-wārithūn*)” (15:23).<sup>42</sup>

40 Parvaiz notes in this regard that while the Qur’anic revelation was „protected“ by God (i.e., from alteration) nature has been left to man to protect it (2015, 177).

41 The same formulation is in verses 25:2, 35:13, 67:1.

42 As for the possessive *li-*, other instances can be found in 2:255, 20:6, 21:19.

A part of this notion of sovereignty is also God's omniscience and omnipotence. The notion of omnipotence is stated clearly in the second part of the already quoted verse 3:189 by the proposition that God is "powerful to do all things ('*alā kull shay' qadīr*)."<sup>43</sup> God's power is contrasted to man's inability, as is the case in one of the verses connected with sending down rain from the sky: "And We have sent down rain from the sky in a measured amount and settled it in the earth. And indeed, We are Able to take it away" (23:18).<sup>44</sup> In another formulation in the already analyzed passage of surat *al-Naḥl* a question is then asked: "Then is He who creates like one who does not create?" (16:17). As for God's omniscience, except for verses with rather soteriological meaning (e.g., 2:255), we can find an often quoted expression claiming God's eminent knowledge of the creation, which can be easily extended to the natural world via the familiar signifiers (and also implies his providence):

And with Him are the keys of the unseen; none knows them except Him. And He knows what is on the land and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but that He knows it. And no grain is there within the darknesses of the earth and no moist or dry but that it is in a clear record (6:59)

Exactly like in the previous instance, God's ability is contrasted to man's inability—implicitly in the beginning of the cited verse and more tangibly in the well-known Throne Verse:

Allah - there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of existence. [...] To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. [...] He knows what is before them and what will be after them, and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills [...]" (2:255).

Last but not least, nature is not conceived as just a passive object of God's will. It submits to him spontaneously:

To Allah prostrates itself (*yasjudu*) whatever creature there is in the heavens and in the earth, and the angels, and they show no arrogance (16:49).<sup>45</sup>

Do you not see that Allah is exalted by whomever is within the heavens and the earth and the birds with wings spread? Each has known his prayer and exalting (*kull qad 'alima ṣalātahu wa tasbīḥahu*), and Allah is Knowing of what they do (24:41).

<sup>43</sup> See also the verses 2:117, 3:189, 5:20, 10:24, 22:18, 24:45, 36:38, 41:39, 64:1, 65:3.

<sup>44</sup> See also 27:60.

<sup>45</sup> See also 16:48, 22:18, 55:6, 17:44, 21:19–20.

In words *sajada* („to prostrate“) and *ṣalāt* („prayer“), nature’s “submission” is expressed in terms used for human acts of worship—again, nature is elevated almost to the human level. Lastly, we should not omit the following verse of surat *al-Nisā*: “And to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and on the earth; and He is encompassing (*muḥīṭ*) of all things” (4:126), where the word “encompassing” (*muḥīṭ*) is sometimes interpreted in a close sense to and even equated with the “environment” (Chishti 2003, 73; Haq 2001, 148; IFEES 2015, 2.2).

Needless to say, the notion of the sovereignty of God is of central ethical significance in Islam, vastly exceeding any specific moral question. It was at least implicitly present in most of the aforementioned examples, and after all, it is God who, in Islamic view, created nature as it exists, as well as designated her significant, balanced, and useful and rendered it as his sign in the revelation, together with prescribing man’s role in relation to it. Typically, the Islamic notion of God’s sovereignty over nature is seen as a sanction of a fundamentally ethical attitude towards it and, possibly, the strongest guarantee of avoiding any kind of arrogance and high-handedness in its treatment (Qaradawi 2001, 208; see also 211–231). In this sense, Islamic ethics may be put in contrast to philosophical naturalism and the cognate notion of man’s sovereignty over nature, sometimes citing the well-known Descartes’ dictum about man being the “lord and owner of nature” (see, e.g., Qaradawi 2001, 34, 208-209; ISESCO 2002a, 60–61). This contrast may be utilized by apologetically oriented authors, who readily attribute the destruction of the natural environment to the secular, “ungodly” character of the Western civilization, attributing to it the emergence of modern environmental problems.<sup>46</sup> The usage of nuclear energy may be dismissed on this basis because man crosses the limits of his competence and situates himself into the role of God (Qaradawi 2001, 189). The notion of God’s sovereignty over nature and “right” to it may be employed in the critique of monopolization and private ownership of key natural resources (see, e.g., Abdul-Matin 2010, 119–122). The sovereignty of God as the sole creator and possessor of the universe and his centrality in both ethical and cosmological frameworks lead some authors to interpret the notion of *tawḥīd*, the oneness of God, as denoting also the unity of all creation or even as a

---

<sup>46</sup> In al-Qaradawi’s words, the guilty one is then the “modern pharaoh of contemporary Western culture” (Qaradawi 2001, 228).

“oneness of God and his creation,” as a basic tenet of Islamic environmentalism (Abdul-Matin uses *tawhīd* as the first of his six principles of it [2010, 6; see also Yaseen 2014 133–4; Naseef, 1986]).

### 2.2.2.h *Man's Responsibility: Trust and Trusteeship*

What is the role of man in the universe, where God is the sole sovereign? Response to this question is fundamentally embedded in the Qur’anic myth of creation as well as the general Islamic notion of "yielding" (to God) as contained in the Arabic word *islām* itself. Among the variety of designations attributed to man, one stands out by its widespread use in the contemporary environmental interpretations of the Qur’an: the concept of *khilāfa*, i.e., “stewardship” or “deputyship.” This is grounded especially in the following formulation from the 30th verse of surat *al-Baqara*:

(Remember) when your Lord said to the angels, “I am going to create a deputy on the earth (*khalīfa fī al-arḍ*)!” (2:30)

The word *khalīfa* (pl. *khalā’if*, *khulafā’*) must be, in this particular context, first distinguished from the caliphate (*khilāfa*) in the sense of politico-religious authority.<sup>47</sup> In contrast, *khalīfa* has a rather general anthropological meaning here; the title is attributed to Adam, the primogenitor of humankind (see following verses 2:31–34) and the Dāwūd (see 38:26). Important is the phrase “on the earth,” which appears in most of the verses and is used as a signifier of nature.<sup>48</sup> Every individual may thus, in the specific „environmentalist“ interpretation, be designated as a deputy to God on earth, bestowed with a limited authority of his own, but bound to follow God’s will and be responsible before him. Another notion in the Qur’an, *amāna* (“trust”), is viewed as supporting this notion of limited remit:

Indeed, we offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man assumed

<sup>47</sup> Which is designated rather as *khalīfat rasūl Allāh*.

<sup>48</sup> 6:165, 10:14, 27:26, 35:39, and 24:56, where it is expressed by the verb *istakhlafa* (to grant a succession, authority, viceregency). The concept is also mentioned in the hadith reading “the world is green and beautiful, and Allah has appointed you as His stewards over it” (Quoted in Naseef 1986) that is, apparently due to its connection to the “greenery,” occasionally mentioned in the discourse (see *ibid.*; see also Dutton 1998, 57).

it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant. (33:72).<sup>49</sup>

Fully converging with the notion of God's sovereignty over nature, an assignment of the specific role of "steward" to man is interpreted as signifying the role of a keeper and custodian of the natural world, responsible to God for the preservation of the created order, described as good and perfect in Qur'an. As such, it again stands in contrast to any notion of unrestrained activity, "ownership" or "sovereignty" of mankind. The great majority of authors and texts draw strongly on the principle of trusteeship (see, e.g., Ba Kader et al. 1983, 13–14; Manzoor 1984, 156–157; Naseef 1986; ISESCO 2002a, 85).<sup>50</sup> Abandonment of the „trusteeship“ and „viceregency“ may be seen as a prime source of environmental problems (Yaseen 2014, 133–134). The note varies from the mere presentation of *khilāfa* and *amāna* as a duty sanctioned by divine punishment (Qaradawi 2001) to a more elaborate notion in which these attributes are a source of human dignity substituting more „mundane“ interests as in consumption or wealth accumulation (cf. Abdul-Matin 2010, 28–32) and their abandonment endangers not just the nature but also the spiritual integrity of humans (Nasr 1990, 96).

At the same time, it is useful to point out a strong measure of indeterminacy of the concept (variously translated as „trusteeship,“ „viceregency,“ or „successorship“). As such, its usage has been criticized as inadequate, not least because it may be viewed as possessing anthropocentric bias, as pointed out by the younger generation of scholars (Gade 2019, 81–83; Tlili 2012, 115–119).

### 2.2.2.i *The Morality of Action*

After we went through the general hierarchical relations in Islamic cosmology and its "moral universe," what is left is to descend finally again to the more "profane" level of everyday practice. How should, after all, humans interact with nature, created and possessed by God with its distinct purposes and carrying its specific qualities in the order of the universe? Contemporary interpreters seek

---

<sup>49</sup> The word occurs also in 4:58, 8:27, 23:8, 70:32 in the form of plural, *amānāt*.

<sup>50</sup> Abdul-Matin includes both *amāna* and *khilāfa* among his six principles for the protection of the planet (2010, 7–9). The allusion to the term also appears in the name of a Canadian Muslim environmentalist initiative, Khaleafa (Khaleafa 2022; see also 5.1.1.d).

an answer to this question in the Qur'an, too. Arguably, the revelation, however, does not offer in this regard many concrete injunctions and is void of explicit provisions analogous to those prescribing, sometimes in a detailed way, the duties towards God and interpersonal relations. This lack of clarity is compensated by authors by referring to general principles of action, signified by general ethical terms, most frequently by the concepts of *ifsād* (spreading corruption or mischief, i.e., *fasād*) and *ihsān* (doing good). Both notions appear in the following verse:

But seek, through that which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and do not forget your share of the world. And do good (*aḥsin*) as Allah has done good to you. And desire not corruption on the earth (*lā tabghī fasāda fī al-arḍ*). Indeed, Allah does not like corrupters (*lā yuḥibbu al-mufsidīn*) (28:77).

The environmental implications are highlighted here, again, by the connection of the act with the “earth,” as is the case with some other verses, also quoted in this context.<sup>51</sup> In one instance, *fasād* is linked directly to what may be interpreted as the destruction of “natural resources”:

When he turns his back, he strives throughout the land to cause corruption therein and destroy crops and cattle (*yufsidu fihā wa-yuhlika al-ḥarṭh wa-l-nasl*). And Allah does not like corruption (2:205).

In spite of the comparative scarcity of any verses applicable directly (or even by analogy) on human action directly towards the elements of the environment, one often quoted theme is indeed present in the Qur'an, related to the central ecological theme of wasting. At the end of one of the images of “revival,” it is stated: “But waste not by excess: for Allah loveth not the wasters.” (6:141, see also 7:31). Significance of the expression “waste not by excess” (*lā tusrifūn*), sometimes translated as “do not be extravagant” is all too clear. This notion is supported by a similar statement discouraging *tabdhīr* (“squander”) in surat *al-Isrā'* (17:26–27), though in rather different context of performing charity. This is straightly linked to the problem of wasting and overconsumption by many authors—be it on the individual level regarding electricity, water, food, and consumer goods (Abdul-Matin 2010, 109; Qaradawi 2001, 147–148; Shirazi 2000, 216–228)<sup>52</sup> or all natural resources on the level of society as a whole (Masri

<sup>51</sup> E.g., “do not spread corruption in the land (*lā ta'thaw fī al-arḍ mufsidīn*)” (7:74); see also 2:60, 7:74, 11:85, 26:18, 29:36, 38:28, and 7:56.

<sup>52</sup> In this context, also 104:2–4 is quoted, referring to collecting wealth with the intention of

1992, 7; Ammar 2001, 203–204). As a last instance, it is possible to mention this very often quoted verse of surat *al-Rūm*:

Corruption has appeared (*zahara al-fasād*) throughout the land and sea by what the hands of people have done (*bi-mā kasabat aydī al-nās*) so He may let them taste part of what they have done that perhaps they will return (*la ‘allahum yarji ‘ūn*) (30:41).

Arguably, this may be the most apposite Qur’anic expression establishing the link between human action and ecology and is quoted by the majority of authors as proof that the causal relationship between human action and environmental degradation is, in fact, presumed in the Qur’an (see, e.g., Abdul-Matin 2010, 10; Shirazi 2000, 39, 43; Parvaiz 2015, 184; ISESCO 2002a, 60; Qaradawi 2001, 208; IFEES 2015, 2.5).

As far as this motive is thematized, the remedy of the ecological crisis and the environmentally sound way of living is searched in the avoidance of the “corruption” (*fasād*) on the earth. What exactly this corruption is, however, a question posed to every interpreter since with *fasād* and *ifsād*, all conceivable kinds of negative, immoral, and destructive activity can be identified, from social evils to, ultimately, the destruction of the environment (cf. Qaradawi 2001, 67-69; Parvaiz 2015, 184). As an illustration of this versatility, it may be recalled that the term was incorporated into the legal system of post-revolutionary Iran as a felony and has been abused to target political opposition against the regime.<sup>53</sup>

Apparently, similarly indeterminate guidelines can also be derived from all of the other aforementioned principles: as far as one accepts them, one should be expected to respect nature as an important part of the creation, constituting the basic living conditions of man while also pointing towards God as its creator and possessor; he should avoid the excessive intervention to it, especially the one, which endangers the perfected balance in which it was created, transgresses the determined role of man as a steward and trustee to God, and usurps his sovereignty over the nature. How these ideas, clear in intent yet general in their

---

becoming immortal, which results in being thrown into hellfire (see Parvaiz 2015, 179).

53 As noted by Enayat, “the most widely accepted definition of ‘fighting God and his apostle’ [*hirāba*] and ‘corrupting (or causing disorders on) the earth’ [*ifsād fī al-arḍ*] in the classical commentaries is highway robbery, and, more specifically killing and plundering people on the highways and thoroughfares, and pillaging and destroying the harvest. Both Sunnī and Shī‘ī authorities agree that the two phrases signify two constituents of a single crime, the second supplementing the first. They also agree that the principal condition for the realisation of the crime is the use of arms” (2001, 141).

content, should be applied and implemented in the contemporary social and environmental context, wherein the relationship between man and the environment is entangled in many unobvious intricacies and has become so expansive that there is almost no domain of human activity, which would not ultimately affect nature, often in a negative way, is a question not easily answered.

From this stems the diversity of the actual responses and propositions on the part of Muslim „environmentalists.“ We have already seen some hints of “applications“ of Qur’anic themes on actual environmental questions and issues. Still, many authors proceed further by “extrapolating” other relevant ethical tenets to the field of environmental ethics and morality. This is most extensively done by traditionalist scholars for whom the issue of the proper relation to the environment tends to diffuse in general injunctions and rules of conduct, sometimes with no boundaries apparent between the natural environment, the life of the community, household, or even personal health, hygiene, and religious rituals (and this is sometimes at the expense of the specificity; see, e.g., Qardawi 2001, 25–29, 105–119; Shihata 2001, 116–165; Shirazi 2000, 13–31). Others, for example, employ the general concept of justice (*‘adl*), central to Islam, to widen the scope of relevant available meanings (see Abdul-Matin 2010, 9–11; Mahasneh 1995). Among others is the performing of charity (Parvaiz 2015, 178–179) or ritual purity (Abdul-Matin 2010, 132–140). Often, it is not the action that affects the environment, but its impacts that are evaluated in a casuistic way, opening the way to numerous other considerations.<sup>54</sup> Finally, many authors link the natural crisis to the immorality of the soul and of the whole social system. In this case, the natural crisis is identified with the spiritual or social crisis. Lack of morality, faith, or religion itself (including secularism or atheism in some cases) may be then seen as the primal cause of the strained relation to the environment. A remedy is sought through spiritual change or adoption of the appropriate religious attitude (whatever that may mean), which should guide man and without which the efforts to change cannot succeed.<sup>55</sup> Hereby, we, however, exit the field of Qur’anic

<sup>54</sup> This often concerns the interrelatedness between the ecological crisis and the state of social and economic institutions (see, e.g., Vadillo and Khalid 1992; Dockrat 2003).

<sup>55</sup> This opinion is widely represented (see, e.g., Nasr [1968] 1990, 96–97; and also his other works). Abdul-Matin (2010, 186) explicitly discusses the contrast between the technocratic attitude to environmental change and inner spiritual change. Yusuf al-Qaradawi (see, e.g., 2001, 208–210) employs the theme in an apologetic way, arguing for the adherence to Islamic orthodoxy. Abdullah Omar Nasseef (1986) states that individuals should always act primarily with having in mind their virtue of being Muslims, regardless of other social roles or



statements and propositions and move toward the diversity of interpretations, which will be discussed later. Now, it is useful to briefly mention still other layers of the scriptural tradition that supplement the Qur'an in underpinning the environmental interpretations.

### 2.2.2.j *Hadith: The Prophet's Example*

Except for the Qur'an, the second most important scriptural source of the Islamic tradition, hadith, is also commonly used in the discourse. From the copious amount of hadith literature covering a very broad span of topics, only a handful of narrations are typically regularly quoted. The significance of hadith may be viewed in that it, in contrast to the predominantly general Qur'anic injunctions covering the norms of morality and cosmological concepts, transmits what can be interpreted as more concrete and specific rules of conduct. These can be subsequently adapted to environmental issues as a source of guidance in the given case as well as the more general „proof“ of the ability of the Islamic tradition to speak to these problems.

A particular cluster of such hadiths on which such adaptation can be illustrated are traditions about planting and cutting trees. Among the most frequently quoted hadiths (which, like most others, appear in the collections in several versions) is one from the collection of al-Bukhari:

There is none amongst the Muslims who plants a tree or sows seed, and then a bird, or a person, or an animal eats from it, but is regarded as a charitable gift for him (Sahih al-Bukhari 2320).<sup>56</sup>

Another one, recorded by al-Tirmidhi (there are also multiple versions of it), in turn, says:

He who cuts a lote-tree, God will send him to Hellfire (Jami' al-Tirmidhi, 5239).

Another specific theme that is addressed in hadiths is the area of human conduct towards animals. As al-Bukhari recorded:

A woman entered the Fire because of a cat which she had tied, neither giving it food nor setting it free to eat from the vermin of the earth (Sahih al-Bukhari 3318).

---

vocations.  
56 I use (occasionally adapted) translations, and numbering provided by the *Sunnah.com* website.

In a similar vein, the following hadith in the collection says:

Once while a prophet amongst the prophets was taking a rest underneath a tree, an ant bit him. He, therefore, ordered that his luggage be taken away from underneath that tree and then ordered that the dwelling place of the ants should be set on fire. Allah sent him a revelation: "Wouldn't it have been sufficient to burn a single ant?" (that bit you) (Sahih al-Bukhari 3319)

Still, other traditions concern what may be casually identified with "pollution."

Safeguard yourselves from the two matters which cause accursing that befalls the one who relieves himself on people's path-ways and under the shades (Bulugh al-Maram, 91)

In a similar vein, this injunction is recorded several times and stands alongside other numerous narrations that forbid urinating or defecating into the still (*dā'im*, *rākid*) water (see, e.g., Sahih Muslim, 281).<sup>57</sup>

Finally, as yet another example of invoked hadiths, traditions dissuading squander may be mentioned. Frequently, a narration is quoted, according to which ablution has to be performed three times (as the tradition generally upholds) and „whoever does more than that does wrong [*asā'a wa ta'addā wa zalama*]” (Sunan al-Nasa'i, 140). A more elaborate version, containing a reference to “extravagance” (*saraf*), semantically related to the already mentioned Qur'anic term of *isrāf* (see above), is recorded by Ibn Majah:

The Messenger of Allah passed by Sa'd when he was performing ablution, and he said: “What is this extravagance [*saraf*]?” He said: “Can there be any extravagance in ablution?” He said: “Yes, even if you are on the bank of a flowing river.” (Sunan Ibn Majah 425).

Other examples could be mentioned as the register of hadiths repeatedly applied on the matter counts at least tens and may reach hundreds in authors focusing specifically on this topic (e.g., Qaradawi 2001; cf. Hancock 2018, 60; Gade 2019, 98–99). In general terms, the methods of treatment and interpretation of hadith do not substantially differ from that of the Qur'an. The conveyed meanings are extrapolated and applied to various contemporary problems. They are viewed as obligations to abstain from environmentally harmful practices in a general way, protect ecosystems, prevent deforestation (and engage in

---

<sup>57</sup> This complements a relatively voluminous amount of tradition devoted to the issues of urination and defecation generally.

reforestation and “greening” practices) or prohibit cruelty against animals (see, e.g., Ba Kader et al. 1983, 15–17; Naseef 1986; Qaradawi 2001, 60–63, 76–83, 89–95). In all these instances, they are also (both implicitly and explicitly) used to document that the Islamic tradition, again, speaks to environmental issues and is not oblivious even to their specific aspects and areas like water, soil, air pollution, or animal ethics.

Still, in a different manner, the Islamic ideal of the Prophet Muhammad, assembled from the recorded traditions, sometimes becomes a part of the catechism too. As expressed by a popularizing article: „Look at the example of Prophet Muhammad, he slept on the ground close to the earth on a bed made of palm leaves, wrapped in his shawl. He sat on the floor to eat simple, wholesome food. He repaired his shoes and urged us to wear out our clothes until they had patches on them“ (Zuberi 2011). A related example, presenting the Prophet as a paragon of asceticism and modesty, one that can be identified with the ecologically conscious lifestyle, has also been mentioned above (see IFEEES 2015, 2.8).

At this place, it is also useful to point out that the hadith literature and the notion of the tradition (*sunna*) itself may be used to underpin various different and more specific ways of argumentation, not least, e.g., in the area of the legal reasoning (see below). As such, the specific “code” of the Islamic environmental catechism progressively loses its determinacy once the register of sources and arguments is widened. What remains, however, its most stable and defining sign is the conviction that hadith indeed does speak to environmental problems, and the tradition as such is thus, through this component, too, not oblivious to it.

#### 2.2.2.k *The Islamic Law and Still other Resources*

Except for the Qur’an and hadith, other resources that can be utilized in the catechism include virtually the whole textual tradition and the repertoire of different—traditionalist or modernist, esoteric or literalist, orthodox or eclectic—approaches to the religious ethics and religion itself. Since the review of all these resources would be far too extensive and also would not fulfill the original purpose of this chapter—as beyond the Qur’an and few traditions from the hadith,

the use of such sources is rather specific to individual authors, I will limit myself only to a couple of examples that appear more frequently.

The first and arguably the most significant is the invoking of the notion of the God-given law (shari‘a), and more specifically, the jurisprudential science (*‘ilm al-fiqh*, literally “the science of the understanding [i.e., of the God-given law]”), and its methods focused on specifying its content and applying it on given situations. As noted by Idlallène (2021, 31–32), what could be conceived of as the “Islamic environmental law” is, however, does not exist in the strict sense of the word and is not used in practice.

In reality, the notion of shari‘a is thus most often invoked rather as a general term and concept, together with stressing its ability or potential to (hypothetically) regulate man-environment relations without, however, providing specific instructions for its application in practice (see, e.g., Manzoor 1984, 157–159; Naseef 1986). Only in some cases does this argumentation become more specific and attempt an application of more concrete (even if still rather general) legal principles on the matter. Of these principles, the most often is the notion of the so-called „higher purposes“ or „objectives“ of law (*maqāṣid al-sharī‘a*). Developed from at least the 3rd century A.H., they may be considered a hermeneutical tool based on the principle that the Islamic law is purposive, i.e., it serves a preordained purpose ensuing from God’s will, which consists of the promotion of social welfare of the Muslim society. As such, it may be considered very close to another juristic principle, *maṣlaḥa* (“common good” or “interest”). The *maqāṣid* were specified, among others, by Muhammad al-Ghazali (d. 1111) as the preservation of religion, life, reason, progeny, and property (*dīn, nafs, ‘aql, nasl, and māl*). The opinions of jurists on their scope and applicability (especially in relation to the explicit Qur’anic injunctions) though differed throughout the premodern era, and neither *maqāṣid* nor *maṣlaḥa* gained the status of a distinguished legal source. (Duderija 2014, 2–4; see also Rasyuni 2005). Their importance, however, has risen since the 20th century as modern Muslim jurists have begun to draw on them as an „important avenue for their various reformist projects,“ and some of them even reached the conviction that they comprise „the essence of the Qur’an and that interpretations founded on these interpretational mechanisms can take precedence over clear Qur’anic text“ (Duderija 2014, 5–6).

The application of these principles follows an expectable way, comprising of the argumentation that environmental harms contravene the objectives of the law and the notion of the common good and, therefore, must be averted (for a more extensive application and discussion of these principles, see Ba Kader et al. 1983, 20–23; Qaradawi 2001, 44–52). Occasionally, also other concepts may be mentioned, such as rendering the environmental conservation to be *fard al-kifayya*, i.e., a “communal responsibility” (WFEIP 2000, 4), or pondering the potential benefit of the application of *zakāt* as a principle for the redistribution of natural resources (Dutton 1998, 60). Obviously, other instances could still be stated, and some of them will be encountered throughout the following pages. From yet a different side, the Islamic legal principles, and institutions may be used to propose a *historical* argument by illustrating that the Islamic societies of the past were not oblivious to the area of environmental protection and possessed instruments to regulate it. These may include historical institutions that have fallen into disuse, such as *hisba* (a policing or supervisory authority present in the medieval Islamic cities under the purview of the local mufti or shaykh)<sup>58</sup> or “protected areas,” *himā* and *ḥarīm*.<sup>59</sup> Ultimately, the argument may be broadened to include also literary, scientific, philosophical, and aesthetic works as well as various historical precedents originating in the large area of the Islamicate world throughout the centuries of its past existence (cf., e.g., Kaminski 2018, 175–179).

In this regard, though, a caveat must be made. Especially as far as the application of legal principles and Islamic law on environmental matters is concerned, not all the speakers and authors propose it or even mention it. In many

<sup>58</sup> This is extensively covered, e.g., in al-Qaradawi (Qaradawi 2001, 245–250); I will discuss the results of the Egyptian scholar’s application of the traditional legal principles and institutions on the matter in more detail in chapter 5 (5.1.2.b).

<sup>59</sup> In fact, *himās* and *ḥarīms* are still used in some areas. According to Kakish (2016), who devoted to the study of the institution of *himā* a rare empirical study (based on investigation of three cases of its actual application in Jordan, Libanon and Egypt), it comprises „a traditional land management and conservation system that has operated in the Arab region for thousands of years“ (2), has its origin in the pre-Islamic era, and is prevalent predominantly in tribal-nomadic areas (5–6). As such, it also declined during the 20th century under the pressure of modernization changes, leading to greater centralization, sedentarization of nomads, and disintegration of local regulatory principles (6–7). As such, it may be equally as well characterized as a „traditional“ or „indigenous“ institution only later absorbed and adapted by Islamic law. This is also conceded by Idllalène in the case of *agdal* (the equivalent of *himā* in North Africa), „still considered more as a customary law institution than as a religious institution“ (2021, 51; the same holds for *nagari* that can be considered *both* Islamic and customary institution [52]).

cases, the articulations of the Islamic environmental discourse remain restrictively “ethical” (i.e., based only on general moral principles) and abstain from thematizing institutional or legal domains (cf., e.g., Abdul-Matin 2010; IFEES 2015). In this sense, the argumentation through law, legal principles, and historical institutions (and especially in its specific instances) may be seen as characteristic of rather the part of the discursive field (obviously represented most markedly by conservative scholars) and not necessarily the part of the universally shared catechism. At the same time, it illustrates the versatility and potential scope of sources, which can be mobilized to underpin the environmental interpretations of Islam. At this point, it is also possible to finish the overview of the virtual catechism that comprises the common pool of motives and meanings that characterize the Islamic environmental discourse as a unifying element and proceed toward the more grounded historical analysis of its successive expressions that will illustrate its historical development, variability, and relations to various social contexts.

### 3 Articulating Moral Posture: The Early Discussions and Primary Motives of the Islamic Environmental Discourse

After introducing the span and the basic characteristics of the discourse, the present chapter may now proceed with the more distinct aim of this work, which is the interrogation of the emergence and the development of the discourse through historical inquiry. In the first of the four following chapters, I will focus on what may be identified as the oldest layer of the discourse and its “foundational” texts. The intent of this analysis will, at the same time, not be only chronological or descriptive. To look for the “origins” of a particular phenomenon also means setting these origins into a particular historical context and, possibly, seeking historical explanations for its emergence. Although the emergence of the Islamic discourse on the environment, as it is stressed multiple times throughout this work, cannot be reduced to one single factor, equally as it does not possess a single trajectory of development or a characteristic of a unified movement, this chapter will still attempt to trace and identify what can be seen as its nearly universal motive permeating the discourse and that is the *moral concern* for the environment and the environmental crisis. Eventually, I will attempt to document the centrality of this motive and explain its significance in the third part of this chapter (3.3).

Still, approaching the theme of morality within the discourse is not possible without considering a relatively broad historical context. This returns to the fact that the Islamic discourse on the environment possesses a significant external element—and this comprises the understanding and definition of the very concepts of “the environment” and the crisis tied to it. Apparently, without these

notions, no moral concern for what they signify can arise. At the same time, neither notion did—and perhaps also could—arise on the specifically “Islamic” ground. And this is for a particular reason: the “environmental concerns,” as we understand them now, do not represent a historically prevailing or “normal” expression of human thought about nature<sup>60</sup> but are overwhelmingly tied to the most recent period of history, namely the rise of what is usually identified as *modernity*. Exploring this relationship will be the aim of the first part of this chapter, where I will first focus on the environmental transformations brought about by the modernization processes, which changed the overall balance between natural and man-induced processes within the environment (3.1.1) and subsequently on the development of the environmentalist thought, which can be viewed as a multidimensional, gradually emerging reaction to the change of the “material” relationship (3.1.2). Eventually, this reaction will be shown to culminate in the period of the 1960s when an epistemic and discursive shift, signified by the coalescence of various environmentalist ideas into one complex debate and discourse of the “new environmentalism” will be identified.

Eventually, it will be this discursive change, accompanied by a register of distinct (and in many instances still actual) frames and tropes setting the basic lines of thinking about the relationship between “man and the environment.” This will be shown to comprise a crucial context of the early Islamic texts on the environment and environmental crisis, which, not incidentally, started to appear in the short aftermath of this period. The second part of this chapter will focus on two such texts, using them as exemplary material to discover the multiple discursive links (3.2).

Finally, before proceeding further, it is useful to note that, expectably, the thesis that the Islamic discourse on the environment is to a great degree connected to and derived from the environmental discourse that first developed rather in a non-Islamic milieu may not be easily acceptable to many of those who embrace the firm conviction about the genuine and “authentic” nature of the Islamic tenets for nature’s protection and preservation. Admittedly, it indeed at least partly contravenes such conviction and may even seem to betray Eurocentric and Orientalist bias with their tendency to seek the origins of anything new and

---

<sup>60</sup> See also the discussion in the final part of section 3.1.2.



progressive in the Occident and to relegate everything non-Western and non-European to the role of a „passive reactor“ (cf. Said 1979, 108–109). To alleviate such feelings, it is, however, useful to note that the ultimate aim of this work is not to present the Islamic discourse as a mere “emulation” of “Western” ideas. As the final part of this chapter will argue, there is nothing “inauthentic” in the articulation of the “Islamic stance” towards the environmental crisis, and such a stance is not a sign of passivity but quite the opposite. Avoiding the debate on the broader discursive and historical context of the adoption of such a stance and its reduction to the inherent ethical posture of Islam is, at the same time, hardly a good basis for the impartial and productive treatment of the whole topic, as it would arguably be little more than the expression of the *orientalist-in-reverse* prejudice, namely that “the Islamic Orient cannot be grasped with the epistemological tools of Western social sciences and that no analogy with Western phenomena is relevant” (Achcar 2008, 21).

## **3.1 Necessary Context: Modernity, the Environment, and Environmentalism**

As already stated, the first part of this chapter will focus on what, arguably, comprises the „necessary context“ for analyzing and understanding the phenomena of Islamic environmentalism, and this is environmentalism in the broader sense and especially in its still actual form, which developed in the 1960s. Still, before proceeding to this core theme, I will begin by addressing another topic.

Both the very term “environmentalism” and the quest to approach environmental issues from the perspectives of morality, ethics, and religion can easily lead to the semblance that what matters is human ideas in the first place. Such an assumption is, however, in stark contradiction with the environmentalist thought itself and would be largely reductionist and misleading. In other words, there would be arguably no ideas about “the environment” without the underlying reality of the “environment“ becoming problematic or otherwise significant in some sense (ultimately necessitating the coinage of the term itself). For this reason, it is appropriate to take a step back and begin this part with a brief look at the history of the changes within the physical environment of planet Earth. These may be simultaneously seen as (comparatively) more solid and less subject to various interpretative biases and, as such, will serve as a useful basis for the discussion of the phenomena of environmentalism itself.

### **3.1.1 The Environment and the Environmental Change: Modern Environmental Transformations**

As disciplines like paleoecology and environmental history have largely made evident, there is no definite point in history when humans began to alter and transform the natural environment, and there has never been a static or “harmonious” relationship between both. Humans, by their very character of biological species and not unlike other creatures, always altered the environment

in which they lived, and this alteration sometimes reached considerable proportions long before the advent of the modern age (see, e.g., Hughes 2005, 183–195; Hošek 2020). However, the scope and intensity of this alteration substantially changed in the course of approximately the last two centuries. In this section, I will focus on what can be termed *modern environmental transformations* (see McNeil 2000),<sup>61</sup> which, regardless of the value sign attached to them, figure as a basic historical fact accompanying what is usually identified as modernization or modernity, standing along (but also intersecting with them) many other changes brought by it: the development of modern forms of science, philosophy, and arts, technological change and progress, the birth of the modern centralized state and global system of international relations and the transformation of the basic political, economic and interpersonal relations within society, from the level of the “self” and nuclear family to that of whole states and societies.

To illustrate the scope of these multiple transformations, it is perhaps useful to first look at the sheer numbers expressed through econometric and demographic data. If we limit ourselves to the 20th century, the volume of the world economy increased fourteenfold (fortyfold since 1820), population about fourfold (from about 1,6 billion to 6 billion; now reaching almost 8 billion; [see McNeil 2000, 6–8]). Another important indicator is that the global extraction of fossil fuels and the production of energy rose about fourteenfold (ibid., 15; cf. Smil 2017, 297).<sup>62</sup> Meanwhile, the extraction of the traditional source of energy—the biomass, increased as well, from about 1 Mt to 2,5 Mt over the course of the century (Smil 2017, 298; McNeil 2000, 14; see also other useful calculations provided by Smil, 298ff).

What is important from the environmental perspective is that all these increases in numbers were compounded by changes in material practice within the

---

61 I use this term in basic agreement with McNeil’s usage, discovering multiple *transformations* in various areas—therefore I also maintain its use in plural. What renders these transformations, ultimately returning to *human activity, environmental*, is obviously their impact on natural ecosystems (cf. McNeil 2000, 193).

62 As McNeil (2000, 15) notes: „No other century—no millennium—in human history can compare with the twentieth for its growth in energy use. We have probably deployed more energy since 1900 than in all of human history before 1900.“ In fact, the rise in the actually delivered useful energy has been even higher, about 30-fold, due to the improved efficiency of its use and corresponding to about the 8-fold increase per capita (Smil 2017, 297–298). See also the following section.

biosphere. The economic and population growth and the increase in the production and consumption of energy materialized in the increased volume of produced foods, manufactured goods, extracted raw materials, and emitted „wastes, “ as well as the spatial configuration of human presence on the earth’s surface, which spread beyond previous limits. In addition, new technologies were deployed, changing the process of production and used materials. All of that has had a tangible impact on the global environment and the man-environment nexus. This is also the reason why modern environmental transformations cannot be easily discussed in aggregate terms—their immense complexity could then easily be lost. Before attempting a more general discussion, I will thus quickly focus on five separate subjects, covering first the theme of energetic revolution as a basic socio-economic factor of the change and subsequently of *lithosphere*, *atmosphere*, *hydrosphere*, and *biota* as particular, and partly separate areas of impact of the change.<sup>63</sup>

### 3.1.1.a *The Energetic Revolution: The Transition Towards the Use of Fossil Fuels*

Arguably, both the pace and many central aspects of the modern environmental transformations would be inconceivable without one decisive and most consequential factor: the large-scale utilization of fossil fuels for the satisfaction of human energy needs. Supplementing and progressively supplanting the long-term reliance on what is now categorized as renewable sources (i.e., the phytomass, solar radiation, and, to a lesser extent, wind, and water flows), fossil fuels (initially mainly coal and later oil) became a dominant source of energy in what can be conceived of as a self-reinforcing process (cf. Mitchell 2011, 13–14), first taking place in the 18th century Britain (a country with vast and easily accessible reserves of coal). The major technological improvements of the invention of the steam engine (first by Thomas Newcomen in 1712 and then its more efficient version by James Watt in 1760s), as well as of the application of coke in metallurgy progressively enabled more intensive extraction of coal and

---

<sup>63</sup> I take partial inspiration for this structuration of the thinking about the problem from McNeil’s (2000) account, on which I also draw heavily in this section.

(with the introduction of steamships from 1800s and the railway from 1830s) eventually also its transportation and distribution in ever growing quantities to the new industrial centers, propping up the use of the steam engines for industrial production (see Smil 2017, 234–245). This process (later compounded by still other developments like the application of electricity) led to an exponential growth of the energy available for human use. Just in 19th century Britain, this amount of energy increased twofold every decade (Mitchell 2011, 14). Already at the time, other European nations followed the path. Globally, from 1810 to 1910, the volume extracted coal increased a hundredfold, reaching 1 Gt, only to continue to grow further to about 8 Gt as of 2015, supplemented by another 4 Gt of oil and a significant amount of natural gas (Smil 2017, 297).

By all means, this development progressively affected almost all aspects of the individual and social life, changing the structure of human societies and the principles of their functioning, first of those which took to the path of industrialization, but later also all the others. The immediate effects of the new technological regime included the steady growth of industrial productive capacity affecting all sectors from consumer goods to construction to military technology, but also, for example, the change in the structure of human settlement (see Mitchell 2011, 14–15). Progressively, this transformed also into more general economic growth and the corresponding increase in affluence (at least within the part of humanity that benefited from it) and, if we give credence to Mitchell's argument, also possibly the change of the modern social structures (see 2011, 17–27). On yet another side, it also contributed to the “great divergence” between Euro-America and the rest of the world, directly tied to the uneven geographical distribution of fossil fuels-driven industrialization (cf. Pomeranz 2000, 59–68). Needless to say, this rift has had far-reaching consequences for Muslim societies and the historical trajectory of the development of the Islamic tradition (see also the discussion in 6.2.3.c). Finally, the extraction and burning of hydrocarbons, as it started to be realized in the second half of the 20th century, also presents an extensive and pressing environmental problem much more directly: by releasing the extracted carbon into the atmosphere and stirring potentially cataclysmic global anthropogenic climate change.

### 3.1.1.b *Lithosphere and Soils*

Earth's solid surface, constituted by soils and rocks, forms a basic setting of life for humans. As such, it has been manipulated and extensively affected by human activity, at least from the introduction of agriculture as a new form of human sustenance. The aftermath of the industrial revolution, though, brought this manipulation to new, qualitatively different levels.

The twentieth century brought a spectacular rise in agricultural productivity through the application of new methods and techniques. Arguably, the most important one was the application of nitrate fertilizers (invented in 1909 by Fritz Haber; see McNeil 2000, 24–25) into the soil, which has been steadily increasing since, and on which (and thereby also in significant amounts of energy needed for their production) the sustenance of about a third of global population depends (ibid. 25–26). Others comprised mechanization, breeding of new crops, use of pesticides, and other technological innovations. These helped to feed the rising world populations as well as to satisfy the increasing demand for various kinds of agricultural products.

Nevertheless, the struggle to increase productivity also caused significant side effects and, in many cases, contributed to the aggravation of a problem endemic to agricultural civilization: the loss of soil quality and its erosion. This concerned especially the newly cultivated areas. Since the end of the 19th century, millions of Europeans migrated into frontier regions (mainly the Americas, Subsaharian Africa, and Siberia) to extend the intensive agriculture on hitherto uncultivated land. However, they often brought with them methods and techniques that were inadequate for the given settings, which sometimes resulted in spectacular failings (the most famous one being the „Dust Bowl “ of Oklahoma and Kansas and similar events in Saskatchewan and Manitoba throughout 1930 still counting among the greatest ecological catastrophes in history; McNeill 2000, 38–43; see also McCormick 1989, 22). Similar migrations with comparable results subsequently occurred also elsewhere in the third world. In many cases, the replacement of traditional localized agricultural practices by more intensive industrial techniques contributed to the degradation of soil in areas prone to it (McNeill 2000, 43–47). Other negative effects on soils and lithosphere may

include the mining of metallic ores and other materials (like sand and gravel), which changed the appearance of landscapes and led to erosion and siltation in affected areas (31–32). The residues of smelting the metals polluted land in the vicinity of related industries, affecting human health and, in some cases, rendering the land unfit for agriculture. In addition to that, the soils have been polluted by industrial and urban wastes, disposed of freely into the soil until the first regulations took place in the 1960s (26–30).

As a result of these processes, about one-third of world soils were, as of 2000, estimated to be affected by various forms of degradation, with some regions having already lost tens of percent of their arable land (*ibid.*, 48; for more actual data and predictions see UNCCD 2022). Nevertheless, this loss has been hitherto offset by the extensive use of artificial fertilizers and other innovations (mainly genetic modifications and new crop breeding). This can also help to explain why the world population was able to quadruple during the last century while the area of arable land only doubled (McNeill 2000, 49, 215).

Notably, the detrimental consequences of the loss of the quality of soil also led to one of the first efforts to conservation (see the next chapter), which continues up to now, if to a mixed success (see *ibid.* 42–43, 46). In contrast to some other impacts of human activity, the impacts on soils and lithosphere have remained mainly local, even if the potentially resulting shortages of food may have wider ramifications (*ibid.*, 49).

### 3.1.1.c *Hydrosphere*

The modern era, particularly the 20th century, also saw an extensive increase in water manipulation as a resource for satisfying various human needs. While hydraulic engineering had been invented already by the first civilizations (see Hughes 2005, 31–33), and humans for a long time drew water from underground sources, both practices changed in scale with the increased amount of energy available acquired during the fossil fuels revolution (*cf.* McNeil 2000, 150).

The energy used for building dams, barrages, and canals enabled the diverting of water from its natural flows and its distribution at will, and that used

for drillers and pumps enabled its extraction from ever-growing depths underground for the same purpose. This practice significantly contributed to economic development as it enabled the supply of water to agriculture and human settlements in conditions where it would otherwise be scarce. Moreover, the destructive effects of the unwanted abundance of water in the form of floods could be mitigated. In yet another sign of development, the application of new technologies of filtration, which from the verge of the 20th century began to supply some urban societies with clean water and spare them from the effects of waterborne diseases (*ibid.*, 126–128).

Yet it was not without its costs. The extensive pumping of aquifers led to their depletion and damage in some regions (*ibid.*, 151–156). The diversion of water through large dams (having been built since the 1930s) had even more tangible impacts on the environment. Embodying ideas of progress, development, and taming of the unsurmountable forces of nature, these projects became favored by national leaders in both democratic and authoritarian countries, providing a double asset of water for irrigation and cheap energy (*ibid.*, 157–159). In some regions, this usage, though, proved unsustainable. A particular case is the usage of almost all of the water of the Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers for irrigation of cotton fields from the 1950s, which eventually resulted in the drying-up of the Aral lake and its replacement with salt desert with wider regional implications (*ibid.*, 163–166). Also, in other places dams and even more modest interventions into the hydrological regime yielded mixed results, with negatives comprising the increased salinity and soil salinization, loss of siltation, dependence on artificial fertilizers, displacement of populations, the spread of pathogens, and loss of wildlife (*ibid.*, 161–162, 170–172, 177–182). The balance of their benefits and costs remains controversial.<sup>64</sup>

Aside from manipulation and consumption, the hydrosphere has also been affected by pollution. Serving as indispensable sources of water for human consumption, industries and agriculture, rivers, lakes (and by extension also seas) have fulfilled for a long time yet another function—that of the deposit of mostly urban waste and sewage. The rise of industrial production and extension of the

---

<sup>64</sup> One of the principal cases of great dam-building remains the Aswan High Dam (*al-Sadd al-‘Ālī*) in Egypt, completed in 1970. As in other cases, the balance of costs and benefits of the project remains controversial (see e.g. Hughes 2005, 213–232; Reynolds 2013).



variety of produced pollutants thus burdened bodies of water. Without exaggeration, it can be said that in any region where large-scale industrialization occurred, the water became polluted to the point that it became largely unsuitable for aquatic life and human usage. Among pollutants were all the typical products of industrialization, from heavy metals and dyes to residues of fertilizers, agrochemicals, and other industrial chemicals (McNeill 2000, 131–135). Lakes and coastal areas (especially in the closed seas) that received this water were overwhelmed with algae (a result of eutrophication) and provided fish catch, which was sometimes poisonous for human consumption due to the high contents of cadmium and mercury (*ibid.*, 136–138). This pollution also often traveled downstream, affecting the situation on the whole course of the given river, and eventually ended up in the sea—which caused problems in some closed seas like the Mediterranean (*cf.* Hughes 2005, 145–148).

As was the case with air pollution and soil degradation, the intolerable consequences of water pollution were among the first to be targeted with environmental regulation. From the second half of the 20th century, they began to be ameliorated by improved technologies and the application of sewage treatment (McNeil 2000, 131–135). This, though, as in other cases, counts mostly for more affluent parts of the world.

#### 3.1.1.d *Atmosphere*

Constituting the most fluid and interconnected medium of the biosphere and being the place of vast natural cycles and streams of matter and energy, the atmosphere would seem to be the least disposed to be affected by human practice. However, the opposite has been proven true. As a result of the massive burning of fossil fuels, metal smelting, and some other practices (like agriculture), vast amounts of a variety of gases and other pollutants have been put into the atmosphere throughout the age of industrialization, causing the change of its composition. Some of this pollution has still been of a local nature, like the soot and smoke in cities (where it was, in fact, present since ancient times [*cf.* McNeil 2000, 55–58; Hughes 2005, 28]) and the direct vicinity of industrial and urban areas. Nevertheless, with the expansion of its scale, the impacts of this pollution

spread further—a particular example may be the sulfur dioxide emissions from large industries run by coal affecting whole regions of global industrial heartlands like the Ruhr area in Germany, Great Lakes, and Ohio industrial belt in the US, the so-called Sulphuric Triangle in Czechoslovakia, Poland and East Germany, Japan's southern islands, or more recently Korea and China, which not only shortened life of inhabitants of given regions but spread on large distances, causing acidic rains with further impact on biota and agricultural production (McNeill 2000, 84–102).

Nevertheless, along with acidic gases that remain in the atmosphere for a limited amount of time, eventually finding their way down to the surface (albeit to the detriment of affected ecosystems), the atmosphere also became storage for other chemical compounds, causing consequences that would be subsequently registered as the first veritably global environmental problems. The first were the chlorofluorocarbons (CFC), which became widely used as refrigerants and spray-propellants after their invention in 1930 by Thomas Midgey. The CFCs finally ended up in the atmosphere, and by the 1970s, these otherwise safe and non-toxic chemicals were discovered to—even in minuscule concentrations—disintegrate the earth's ozone layer, vital for the prevention of harmful UV radiation from penetrating the atmosphere. This subsequently caused widespread alarm and ultimately a global action to ban their usage, even though the effects of already inflicted harm linger (and will for some time) (111–115). Finally, from the late 1980s (although the evidence for it had been available even earlier), a new and even more extensive problem of changing the composition of the atmosphere started to be systematically studied and documented: the impacts of the massive emissions of carbon dioxide released as a result of the burning of fossil fuels on the global climate.

As in the previous case, atmospheric pollution began to be regulated both locally and regionally in the second half of the 20th century, as some of its effects became intolerable and began to be resented and protested against by populations demanding a better quality of life. At least in the developed societies with an economic surplus to be invested in corresponding technological measures, these efforts were relatively successful (McNeill 2000, 70–71, 81–83, 88–89, 92, 96–

99). This also counts for the global action against CFCs (easily supplanted by other chemicals McNeill 2000, 113–114]).

Unfortunately, nothing like that can be said about greenhouse gas emissions, the reduction of which has hitherto proven to be an unsurmountable task, even though the global coordination efforts in this direction started already in the 1990s. As such, climate change, potentially upsetting the very natural conditions to which humans, both as societies and species, have been adapted (McNeill 2000, 108–111), remains the most pressing environmental problem of nowadays, touching on the very foundation of the modern industrial societies covering their energy needs by burning fossilized hydrocarbons. I will touch on this problem a couple of times when discussing Islamic environmental activism connected to the issue of climate change (see particularly 5.1.1.c).

### 3.1.1.e *Biota and Ecosystems*

Finally, all of the changes imposed by mankind on the earth affected also all other living beings. A notable section of the manipulations of the biosphere were beneficial to humans. These included (first the environmental and later medical) control of pathogens in the form of contagious diseases and parasites (McNeill 2000, 194–201). Many of these were largely reduced, and some were eliminated (like the smallpox virus). Yet, as McNeil points out, there were also significant setbacks—in the form of the evolution of new resistant strands of viruses and bacteria and relapses—or spread of altogether new—diseases, likely resulting from the incursion into the hitherto uninhabited ecosystems in tropics (201–211; see also McNeil 1976). This is among the reasons why the human victory over pathogens (vividly imagined still in the 1960s and 1970s) has not yet materialized if it ever will.

Whereas the pathogens were deliberately targeted, many other changes in the biosphere occurred as unintended consequences of other activities. Through the spread of agricultural land, settlement, mining, logging, fishing, hunting, and eventually also seeking leisure, humans enhanced their presence and intervention in almost all global ecosystems, except for the most inaccessible and inhospitable (which we still have affected indirectly). According to McNeill, the effects which

these interventions inflicted on the biosphere can be conceived in the following way:

co-evolution gave way to a process of “unnatural” selection whereby chances for survival and reproduction were apportioned largely according to compatibility with human action. In this new regime those creatures symbiotic with us prospered greatly. These included those that suited our needs and adapted to domestication (cattle, rice, and eucalypts), and those that found suitable niches in our changing, churning biosphere (rats, crabgrass, and the tuberculosis bacillus). Creatures we found useful but incapable of domestication (bison and blue whales) and those that could not adjust to a human-dominated biosphere (gorillas and the smallpox virus) faced extinction or at best survived on sufferance. (2000, 193)

In general, the organisms in the latter category seem to highly prevail, driven out from their former habitats mainly through the expansion of land reserved for human use. The main factor was, as in some previous cases, agriculture mainly through the expansion of croplands (twofold over the century) and their adjustment from older patchwork patterns to monocultures (going hand in hand with mechanization and use of pesticides [see McNeill 2000, 212–226]); all these effects were but exacerbated in tropics where most biodiversity is concentrated. Marine ecosystems, in turn, were deliberately exploited through extensive fishing and whaling (McNeill 2000, 237–252), and still other species (aquatic and terrestrial) affected by biological invasions (252–262).

The expansion of human activity and changes in its quality caused a loss of biodiversity in many places and, despite the inherently problematic nature of making reliable estimates,<sup>65</sup> quickened the pace of extinction of species. Neither the full extent of this process nor its consequences are yet known, although the scenario of the so-called Holocene (or the sixth mass) extinction is widely debated among naturalists (McNeill 2000, 262–264; Cowie, Bouchet, and Fontaine 2022).

---

<sup>65</sup> Against popular imaginaries of science, the abundance of many biota is hard to establish through scientific methods reliably; this counts especially for insects, the most diverse class of organisms of which only a minority has been yet described (see Saunders, Janes and O’Hanlon 2019).

### 3.1.1.f *Conclusion: The Scope and the Uncertainty of the Change*

A legitimate question can be perhaps now asked: what is the point of including the above-mentioned data and narratives (even if they are rather patchy, insufficient, and in many cases simplified, as it should be acknowledged) in a study preoccupied with a cultural phenomenon in modern Islam? In the first place, the above-exposed account helps, to a great degree, explain why the concern for nature and the environment gradually emerged in modern societies. Since the beginning of the 19th century and especially throughout the following one, human societies began to manipulate, adjust, exploit, and alter the natural environment to an ever-growing extent and to such degree that the consequences which usually affected the very conditions of human life and the agency itself could be no longer ignored. While this trend originally emerged in Euro-America, it also progressively spread to other geographical and cultural regions. At the same time, considering the „material“ environmental transformations enables us to see another thing: the problem of the man-nature relationship in modernity comprises a problem that is complex and evades easy judgments and solutions. Let me outline at least some of these complexities.

First and most importantly, what is conceptualized as “the environment,” “environmental change,” or “environmental impacts,” and “problems” in reality signify a diverse variety of processes and problems. They differ in scale and spatial distribution: some of them are of relatively limited and local nature (like the creation of a dump of toxic waste on a particular site), while others have global outreach (like the pollution of oceans by plastic). They also differ in the mechanism of their impact: some of the environmentally harmful substances emitted into the environment (like heavy metals) comprise manifest poisons with a direct impact on ecosystems, human health, and quality of life. Still, there are also substances that are non-toxic or even a natural part of the environment (like carbon dioxide) or practices that seem otherwise beneficial and necessary (like intensive agriculture), once the scale of their application crosses a distinct threshold, may present a systemic threat to the established ecological balance globally. Moreover, the consequences, and especially the long-term ones, of the

application of many technologies (like the deployment of big amounts of nitrate fertilizer into the environment; cf. McNeil 2000, 26) are either not altogether clear or not clear at all. Many significant effects of modern industrial activity went unnoticed for a relatively long time. Others were noticed but deemed tolerable until evidence of their intolerability was gathered or the willingness to tolerate them vanished, and still others remain being tolerated simply for a perceived absence of suitable alternatives or a lack of institutional or political capacity to curb them. As it has been shown in a number of examples, the environmental change accompanying modernity has not been unequivocally negative.<sup>66</sup> And even where it was, it occurred and in many instances keeps occurring as an unintended consequence of actions and practices generally understood as necessary for the fulfillment of the main aspirations of the modern civilization, including many of the cherished goals of securing well-being, liberty, security and affluence of its citizens, or in short achieving the progress and development (cf. McNeill 2000, xxiv). In this sense, it does not fundamentally divert from the general ambivalence of modernity and modern civilization, which, throughout the 20th century, oscillated between the miracles of economic, scientific, and cultural progress and the horrors of total war, genocide, and the specter of nuclear annihilation, a civilization about which Vaclav Smil aptly notes that it is “fabulously liberating and admirably constructive—but also uncomfortably constraining, horribly destructive, and, in many ways, self-defeating“ (2017, 296). Lastly, as far as their final outcome is concerned, the modern environmental transformations must be acknowledged as uncertain and unpredictable, indeed comprising “a gigantic uncontrolled experiment on the earth” (McNeill 2000, 4).

Arguably, all these facets and attributes should make us, at least as scholars and scientists, wary of viewing the modern environmental transformations and crises through simplistic lenses and prisms as one unified process subject to a determinate mover or mechanism, an outcome of one particular societal force or factor, or a single story of hope, success or doom—at least until such frameworks are critically and openly discussed and the given criteria specified. Eventually, it is the fundamental ambivalence, indeterminacy, and uncertainty of the environmental change and the scope and character of

---

<sup>66</sup> As John McNeil writes, „environmental changes usually are good for some people and bad for others, and indeed good for some species or subspecies and bad for others“ (2000, xxv).

environmental problems that signifies the importance of the *interpretative* frameworks through which the processes taking place “out there” in the physical world are approached and treated within society.

*Table 1: Indicators of global environmental change in the 20th century*

*Global data approximated. Elaborated from McNeil 2000; Smil 2017; Ritchie, Roser and Rosado 2020*

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>1900</b>	<b>2000</b>
Global Population (billions)	1,6	6
Per Capita World GDP (1990 dollars)	1263	5503
Coal Production (Mt)	762	4700
Oil Production (Mt)	15	3600
Biomass Extraction (Mt)	1400	2500
World Energy Use (Mt of oil equivalent)	1900	30000
Carbon dioxide emissions (Gt)	1,95	25,2
Lead Emissions in the atmosphere (t)	47000	300000 <sup>i</sup>
CFC Emissions (t)	0	250000 <sup>ii</sup>
Freshwater use (km <sup>3</sup> )	580	5190
Area of Croplands (million km <sup>2</sup> )	8	15,5
Irrigated Area (million km <sup>2</sup> )	0,48	2,6
Area of Forests (million km <sup>2</sup> )	58	45
Marine Fish Catch (Mt)	2	75
Cattle Population (million head)	350	1400
Poultry Population (million head)	750	20000

i A decline from the peak of 430,000 in the 1970s.

ii A decline from the peak of 750,000 in the 1970s.

### **3.1.2 Environmentalism**

As already indicated at the beginning of this section, the phenomena of “environmentalism” is treated here, despite the existence of some past analogies, as essentially a modern one. As such, it can be identified with the critical reflection on the negative aspects of the problems caused by modern environmental transformations and the effort to rectify them. As such,

environmentalism and environmentalist thinking have now become entrenched within our societies with the corresponding set of social institutions and practices. Still, what appears today as an ordinary component of our daily life emerged only recently and has its own history of incremental development and, in some cases, also ruptures and social struggles.

The following historical analysis, as in the previous case, should at least partly deconstruct what appears (and is often labeled) as a unified phenomenon and show it in a different light: as an assemblage and a diverse set of agendas and imaginaries that correspond not only to various aspects of the modern environmental change (themselves diverse and heterogeneous as shown above) but also an even greater diversity of social and cultural influences and interests speaking to it. This diversity will serve as a comparative material in the following section, and arguably, it is only with regard to it that (equally as diverse) varieties of Islamic discourse on the environment can be discussed properly.

I will divide the discussion into three parts. The first one will cover the period before the 1960s when environmentalism did not yet play the role of a dominant intellectual or social movement (and did not even exist as a unified stream under this name) but in which still many of the later widely accepted environmentalist ideas emerged and started to circulate. In the second part, I will address the key period of the 1960s and the early 1970s, during which environmentalist ideas became popularized, with many of them gradually accepted and becoming part of the mainstream political agenda. Finally, in the third, I will shortly discuss the theme of the relationship between religion and environmentalism, especially in light of the “environmentalist revolution” of the 1960s.

### *3.1.2.a Between Romanticism, Meliorism, and Science: The Critical Reflections on the Environment Before the 1960s*

Arguably, one of the remarkable aspects of environmentalism is that it took surprisingly long before it became a mainstream trend within modern society. Even though, in many instances, harmful impacts of modern industrial development began to be felt relatively early in the 19th century, the regard for the



environment and the systemic environmental problems was for a relatively long time (approximately until the 1960s) not in the register of widely circulated political and social ideologies and would be incomprehensible to most of people.

This can be ascribed to the fact that during this period, which also overlaps with what has been defined in sociological circles as the „first“ or „classical“ phase of modernity, the center of gravity of social thinking concentrated around the ideas of social progress and social reform—embodied by the projects of industrial and economic development, cultural reform and struggle for political and social rights, national emancipation and nation-building and eventually also the clash between the contradicting versions of these projects (the liberal, communist and fascist), unleashed during the first half of the 20th century (Eisenstadt 2000, 3–12). Within this period, Beck, Bonns, and Lau note (2003, 4) that the attitude towards nature was predominantly that of “exploitation.” As such, nature “appears as the ‘outside’ of society [...] conceived of as a neutral resource, which can and must be made available without limitation.” A basic instrument, establishing modern control over nature and enabling its exploitation, has been science (the early phase of modernity being characterized by the unlimited belief in it [4–5]). At the same time, the early modern philosophical program of gaining “power” over nature (Bacon 2003, 221) and rendering man its “master and possessor” (Descartes 1998, 35) strongly influenced its very notion (Macnaghten and Urry 1998, 10–11). Nature was to be cognized and made transparent through newly devised modern scientific methods (see, e.g., Koyré 1957; Koestler 1964; Bowler 1992). The resulting knowledge was, in turn, applied in various domains of manipulation of nature (e.g., through the quickly expanding branch of engineering [see Burke III 2005, 7–10]).<sup>67</sup> This “classical” modern attitude can also be identified with the more general concept of *environmental instrumentalism* (Macnaghten and Urry 1998, 1, 11).

Still, as dominant as this overall approach was (and, as we may ascertain, it retains strong influence even now), the 19th and the early 20th centuries also saw, if slow and fragmentary, the emergence of ideas that would later become central to the environmentalist program and thinking—the reverence of nature, its beauty and value, the struggle for its conservation and considerate management,

---

<sup>67</sup> Importantly, in analogy with the manipulation of the human society itself (see Foucault 1991; 2008).

the critique of industrialism and modern way of life, and the realization of the highly complex nature of ecological relations from which the human society cannot be meaningfully taken out. The consideration of the early phase of development of these ideas must be seen as important for a specific and already presumed reason—to show that “environmentalism” does not comprise a unified ideology stemming from a defining motive (like the struggle for individual liberty or social justice), but connects in itself a number of concerns arising from different and sometimes disparate contexts. Drawing on the histories of McCormick (1989) and Macnaghten and Urry (1998), these can be generalized as comprising three distinct areas.

Among the first and ones of lasting influence (strongly determining our view of “nature” even now [cf. Morton 2009]) can be seen the broad cultural movement of *romanticism*, which arose on the verge of the 19th century and promoted (not least in opposition to the rationalist and objectifying enlightenment tendency) emotional relationship to nature as a source of inspiration and solace. As such, romanticism combined with other important influences, particularly the development of naturalism as a scientific discipline as well as a source of curiosity and leisure activity of upper classes and, finally, also the critique of the industrialism and urban way of life (McCormick 1989, 1–5). Given these influences, already the 19th century saw the emergence of individual authors promoting reverence of nature and its preservation, as well as of the first social movements and popular campaigns in this direction. In the works of romantic and transcendentalist authors like William Wordsworth, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry David Thoreau, nature was revered and glorified, and criticism of its unlimited exploitation was raised. Given the activities of individuals like John Muir, the establishment of national parks and reserves, first in the US (1872) and later also in other countries and colonies (Australia in 1879, Great Britain in 1888, New Zealand in 1894), took place. Public campaigns against cruelty to animals were led, and the first associations focused on the preservation of nature were founded (most importantly, the still-active Sierra Club in 1892). Finally, the century also saw the adoption of the first laws against pollution and the establishment of the concomitant governmental agencies (first in Britain in 1863

and 1865) as well as the ratification of the first international agreement on the environment in 1886 (see McCormick 1989, vii, 4–6, 10–13).

In this way, many of the key environmentalist ideas, including that man's inconsiderate attitude towards nature may threaten his own extinction (an idea appearing in G. P. Marsh's influential *Man and Nature* of 1864 [McCormick, 11]) and that the modern industrial and urban way of life has significant deficiencies preventing man from living in a long-term harmony not only with nature but also his own self, were already formulated by the end of the 19th century. Nevertheless, these ideas found only a limited number of adherents on the fringes of society and, significantly, far away from the channels of real economic or political power. Even if they sometimes raised a considerably complex and radical critique of the modernizing society (like H. D. Thoreau did in his still-read *Walden* [2004]), their influence went no further than to creating pockets of counter-culture figuring as an aestheticized alternative to the hegemonic trend. National parks and natural reserves functioned as such pockets well, preserving the aesthetic and leisure value of the "wilderness" for, especially, the upper social classes. Despite the lasting influence of romanticism, it by itself did not change the course of the development of modern society (see Macnaghten and Urry 1998, 13–14) and figures as only a partial component within the rise of environmentalism, establishing and adumbrating its "idealist" underpinnings.

The second important influence must be seen paradoxically, partly in opposite motivations. These were, instead of accenting the "spiritual" and aesthetic value of nature on its own, concerned with its value for state and society, i.e., basically along the prevailing modern paradigm, as a resource to be protected, cared for, and used rationally to ensure the lasting possibility of future utilization. The corresponding doctrine, identified as "conservationism" (standing along and sometimes against Muir and others' "preservationism") and represented particularly by the personality of Gifford Pinchot, appeared towards the end of the 19th century in the US, first in the area of forestry.<sup>68</sup> While the ideas of the preservationists came first and achieved some success earlier in the 19th century through the promotion of national parks and reserves, they were the

---

<sup>68</sup> Pinchot made his first focus on forests, which were, after a century of accelerated development and settlement, being depleted at a growing pace in the US. Conservationism thus drew on the older, particularly the German tradition of forestry (McCormick, 6).

conservationists who eventually dominated the debate about the value of the environment and its management for the decades to come (McCormick 1989, 12–14). This was, not least, the result of the support of states, which eventually noticed the value of conservationist efforts for economic policies. In the US, first during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt (1901–1909) and then Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1933–1945), they began to be put into practice. Throughout the 1930s, what were considered key national resources were for the first time put under tighter federal control, and as a part of the effort for national recovery after the Great Depression in the 1930s, comprehensive and coordinated development projects were adopted in the field of forestry, water management, and soil conservation (i.e., the areas already affected by the uncontrolled exploitation [McCormick 1989, 14–16, 20–22; see also the previous section]). Among the measures adopted in accordance with the conservationist logic may be counted many more in different parts of the world, notably, the pioneering efforts for the preservation of wildlife in colonies (particularly Africa), motivated first by the interest of preserving game for hunters as well as for example protecting birds beneficial for agriculture. These also ensued in the first international treaties and conventions in the area of protection of living nature—an effort supported later also by preservationists and naturalists (McCormick 1989, 17–19). The efforts to preserve forests and prevent soil degradation followed suit. Eventually, the conservationist impulse gained further pace after the Second World War. As the war, which put on display the destructive aspects of modernity in full scale, was (as essentially any war) at least partly stirred (e.g., in the case of Japan) by the hunger for natural resources, the newly established international institutions after 1945 like the United Nations and World Bank embraced the agenda of preservation and equitable distribution of these resources. The main players were the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the global body's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, a number of meetings were held, like the United Nations Scientific Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Resources in Lake Success in 1949 or 1951 FAO's conference on land conservation in Asia. The agenda was, among other things, influenced by the theme of global food security (connected to the regulation of agricultural practice and soil protection) and Malthusian (see also

below) concerns about the rising population, popularized at the time through influential books of Osborn (1948) and Vogt (1948; see also McCormick 1989, 25–31, 36–38). The postwar era also saw progress in preservationist efforts, signified by the growing number of international conferences and the establishment of international institutions (I will address them in more detail in 4.1).

As such, conservationism, essentially returning to the *meliorist* underpinnings of modern social and political philosophies and identifiable with *environmental realism* (Macnaghten and Urry 1998, 1, 15–16), must be seen as the second important resource and essentially (as it will be yet discussed later) a lasting doctrine of environmentalist thinking. In comparison to the preservationist motives, it also proved to be more impactful in some areas but also limited to selected agendas of human interference with nature, namely those perceived as relevant for developmental and economic concerns. Still, despite its relative convenience to state policy-making, its tenets were scarcely put into practice on a large scale by the postwar period and achieved little to turn the prevailing tide of the economic and social policies. Some of the conservationists' projects (e.g., in the realm of forestry or water management; see the discussion of great dams in 3.1.1.c) would also be later criticized by later-day environmentalists.

Lastly, it would certainly be wrong to omit the third important factor in the rise of environmentalist thinking: *science*. Although science has been presented above as an instrument of rational control of nature on which its modern exploitation was (and still is) based, it was also its gradual progress that ultimately opened the way to registering the deficiencies of the instrumental, human-exceptionalist attitude and apprehending of complex ecological relationships. Also, in this case, movement in this direction started relatively early (and virtually concurred with the development of the “mechanistic” sciences focused on controlling natural laws, which is not so surprising given the extraordinary diversity of science as a human practice). Already before the 19th century, naturalists like Carl Linné, John Ray, and Gilbert White developed the system classification and taxonomy of biota and laid the foundations for the analysis of dynamic processes within living nature (Bowler 1992, 139–192). This was compounded by the ever-growing volume of information accumulated in other

disciplines like geology, paleontology, geography, and, not least, the attempts to compose an integrative picture of nature like that in the work of Alexander von Humboldt (ibid., 204–210). This motion ultimately culminated in the work of Charles Darwin, which revolutionized the notion of the man-nature relationship by showing man as a part of nature through his incorporation into the history of its evolution (McCormick 1989, 3) even though Darwin's work was not immediately and easily accepted (Bowler 1992, 323–335) and has been historically adapted to different ends.

Within this context, the term *ecology* was first used in 1866 by Ernst Haeckel, a German biologist and popularizer of Darwin's ideas (Bowler 1992, 361–378). Progressively, ecology developed as a specialized science focused on explaining relationships among organisms within their natural environment. Although relatively marginal, it found its place among other sciences and functioned as an applied discipline in agriculture and fisheries (Krebs 2008, 5–6). Needless to say, science, through disciplines like biology or pedology, was a necessary component of conservationist projects. Ornithology, in turn, played an important role in popularization of nature (McCormick 1989, 23).

Finally, in the postwar period, the further progress, accumulation of data, and integration of knowledge in the field of environmental sciences (which were only later designated as such; cf. Bowler 1992, 1–2) slowly began to coalesce into what ultimately became a decisive factor in the rise of environmental conscience—the holistic picture of complexity and interconnectedness of the ecological systems covering the whole surface of the Earth and their ultimate limitedness and fragility vis-à-vis the incursion by human industrial and developmental activities (see the next section).

More practically, biologists also played a major role and sometimes took the lead in the postwar conservationist agenda, which gradually began to focus on the issue of endangered species and wild nature. To this end, the International Union for Protection (later Conservation) of Nature (IUCN) was established in 1948 by the initiative of the evolutionary biologist and the first Director General of UNESCO, Julian Huxley (see McCormick 1989, 31–46). I will yet return to this organization, which notably influenced Islamic discourse on the environment in 4.1). Among the successful popularizers of nature and ecological relations

within it was also Rachel Carson, whose *The Sea Around Us* of 1951 gained widespread readership and was issued in multiple languages (Gottlieb 2005, 122).

In this way, it is thus possible to show how the three disparate, if also mutually interacting and slowly coalescing trends and motivations—the sentimental and aesthetic relationship to nature derived from its romantic conception, the utilitarian interest in conserving natural resources for the possibility of their exploitation in future, and the pursuit of scientific knowledge in uncovering the dynamic processes and mechanisms within the environment—established the basis for a gradually emerging reflection of the impact of what has been described above as the great transformation in human ecology.

It is also perhaps appropriate to admit at this place that the way of presentation of the history of environmentalism in this chapter may seem Eurocentric. This may be a relevant critique, but it must also be seen in relation to the main theme of this work—the Islamic discourse on the environment—and its main thesis, namely that this discourse emerged and developed essentially in reaction to the circulation of environmentalist ideas, ideas that have in many of their apparitions, origin in the Western societies, which in turn bear the brunt of responsibility for ecological harms, not least in the large parts of the world, which until the second part of the 20th century were under their colonialist domination and suffered from the appropriation of their landscapes and natural resources. As for the environmental history of Islam (including the intellectual history of the pre-1960s period), I will return to it, including the lamentable fact that it is virtually non-existent (see also Mikhail 2013b, 9; 2017, 14) later (6.2.3.c).

What is important to stress is that despite the progress in various areas, the postwar period did not bring a tangible rupture in either the expansive and exploitative trajectory of development of the modern industrial societies or in the epistemological and cultural paradigm that underpinned it. Even if some disturbing data about the progressing environmental risks and evolving problems began to be noticed by specialists and concerned observers, the prevailing mood was more interested in forgetting the dark era of unprecedented military conflict in a promise of affluence, social security, and consumption. The post-war economic miracle in many Western countries and Japan fulfilled some of these expectations. As John McCormick observes, „in such a climate, predictions of

doom seemed premature, and talk of resource shortages irrelevant“ (1989, 31). But it did not take long before the situation abruptly changed.

### 3.1.2.b *The 1960s: The Environmental Crisis and the New Environmentalism*

Arguably, environmentalism as we know it today is, in its most distinct traits, a result of a development that occurred within a relatively short period of time and can be viewed as a cultural and epistemic revolution. Such a fact must be seen as remarkable but not completely unique. In fact, there are other examples of the kind that can be identified throughout history, and incidentally, some of them during the same period after the Second World War.<sup>69</sup> It was approximately one decade, which may be conveniently demarcated by the years of 1962 and 1972,<sup>70</sup> during which the older concern for environmental relations as a potentially significant area of human interest described above transformed into what is usually defined as the *new environmentalism* and ultimately became a movement and discourse with global outreach.

If we were to examine the main difference between the preceding periods, perhaps the single most important one would be the scale. Whereas before 1962, the concepts of the environment and ecology, as well as the notions of ecological harms and environmental conservation, comprised a part of specialized knowledge available to a narrow group of experts and without any obvious relationship to society and politics, after a couple of years, they became ordinary words and concepts of common language and understanding, essentially in the way we use them now (even if sometimes to the detriment to their original scientific meaning).<sup>71</sup> This popularization and commonalization were, at the same time, not random: it was a product of a relatively profound epistemic shift that

remolded the hitherto existing ideas about the environment—partly by their

69 Suitable examples are the rapid delegitimization of theories of scientific racism and colonial domination after 1945 and the sexual revolution and successful civil rights movement culminating in the 1960s. The latter two were also connected to the environmental turn. In the specific area of Islamic studies, the status of epistemic revolution may also be arguably ascribed to Edward Said's critique of Orientalism (see 1979).

70 The first was marked by the release of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, and the second by the realization of the first global conference on the environment under the sponsorship of the UN.

71 As noted by Charles Krebs, the word „ecology,“ as such, „came to mean everything and anything about the environment, especially the human impact on the environment and its social ramifications“ (2008, 2).



mutual integration and synthesis but also by their introduction into new contexts. This epistemic change may be ultimately reduced to one primary motive: *introducing ecology as a concern for human survival* (cf. McCormick 1989, 48).<sup>72</sup>

Resuming the turbulent and multifaceted history of the genesis of new environmentalism, which, moreover, is not so often approached historically and the history of which is not so widely known, is not an easy task. Drawing on accounts of McCormick (1989) and Gottlieb (2005), both admittedly standing among many more devoted to the history of environmental movement, the inclusion of which is though outside of the scope of this work) and addressing especially the discursive dimension of the change, I will briefly focus on three significant vectors and simultaneously discursive components from which the new environmentalism arose: first, the accumulation of a critical mass of scientific data about environmental harms and their systemic, global nature as well as their successful communication to the public; second, their attribution to the structural characteristics of the modern societies as wholes and their malfunctions and inner contradictions; and, third, the identification of the ecological problems with analogous existential threats, affecting human well-being, health, and ultimately also survival as a species and civilization (see McCormick 1989, 49; Gottlieb 2005, 121–158).

As for the first vector of the emergence of environmentalism, the scientific progress in analyzing the environmental processes has already been identified as significant. What, however, seems to be decisive is that in the period after the Second World War, it finally encountered a problem that was able to move public opinion: the uncontrolled spread of new chemical substances within the environment resulting from the accelerated application of new industrial technologies. Such was also the concern raised in the book which is usually considered seminal: Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, which, after its publication in 1962, dominated the list of bestsellers for more than six months and became the first widely read book on ecology (McCormick 1989, 55–56). Following up with the earlier controversies surrounding the fallout from atmospheric tests of nuclear weapons, which already alerted the public to the danger of the unlimited spread of

---

<sup>72</sup> McCormick also singles out the second difference, the activist and political nature of the movement, which, though, may also be arguably ascribed to this first and primary one. I will discuss this problem in more detail below.

pollution (McCormick 1989, 54), Carson famously took up the issue of pesticides, which in the postwar period began to be massively applied and which she showed to cause hitherto undocumented harmful effects within living nature. As many notice, Carson's book was not so influential given her findings and judgments on DDT (which were not completely novel and unique and would remain in some aspects controversial; see e.g., Conis 2017), but the specific way of framing and transmitting her cause. As Gottlieb points out:

Carson argued that public health and the environment, human and natural environments, were inseparable. Her insistence that expertise had to be democratically grounded—that pesticide impacts were a public issue, not a technical issue decided in expert arenas often subject to industry influence—anticipated later debates about the absence of the public's role in determining risk and in making choices about hazardous technologies. Carson's powerful writing style wedded a dispassionate presentation of the research with an evocative description of natural and human environments under siege from a science and a technology that had "armed itself with the most modern and terrible weapons." This technology, she declared, was being turned "not just against the insects [but] against the earth" itself. Such writing aimed not simply to present but to convince. The mission of *Silent Spring* became nothing less than an attempt to create a new environmental consciousness (2005, 125).

The notion of interconnectedness, conflict (which was strengthened by attempts to abort the book's publication on the part of industrialist circles [Gottlieb 2005, 125; McCormick 1989, 56]), and the existential dimension of the matter at stake brought a new prism through the environmental problems were viewed. It translated into the heightened sensitivity of the public to industrial accidents, periods of increased air pollution, and new findings about the lack of control and negligence. The intensity and frequency of accidents and environmental problems, moreover, multiplied in the post-war period of economic growth (McCormick 1989, 56–60).

The concerns brought by Carson ultimately resonated well with the second interpretative framework. Located again in the leading industrial and economic powerhouse of the US, the driving force of this connection was the rising tide of the anti-establishment culture characteristic of the 1960s. This was characteristic of, notably, the works of Murray Bookchin (see, e.g. [1962] 1974;

1965), a New York-based anarchist writer and social theorist and another acknowledged proponent of the early new environmentalism (if less influential than Carson). In contrast to Carson's approach centered on harmful technologies and their impacts on ecosystems and living nature, Bookchin drew attention to a different thing: the environmental aspect of the post-war consumerist urban way of life as a whole. Compounded by similar cultural critiques of Paul Goodman (see, e.g., Goodman and Goodman 1960) and the German emigre and representative of the Critical Theory school Herbert Marcuse (see 1964), the inspirators of what subsequently became known as the "New Left" simultaneously broadened and deepened the scope of critique of environmental ills. This now, along with the pesticides and radioactive pollutants, came to include numerous aspects of daily life—disposable products and waste, overconsumption of commodities, increase in traffic in cities bringing noise, pollution, and jams, and eventually, the expansive and unsustainable urban development itself (Gottlieb 2005, 127–134).

In addition to the critique of consumerism, the New Left authors also attempted to address more elaborately the question of the ultimate source of the problems, which seemed to paradoxically mushroom in the newly established affluent society—the closed elite system of social control personified by the typical anathema—the domineering and self-defeating order of capitalist society in which industrial complexes and corporations dictate the everyday way of life, inflate their profits through ever-increasing production and infecting consumers with artificial needs, which ultimately push aside other dimensions of life and threaten its very conditions. This line of thinking eventually coalesced with another agenda of the 1960s anti-establishment movement—the resistance to war. Ultimately, the two things—the war on people and the war on nature (which appears already in Carson's comparison of pesticides to weapons) could be made parallel. They could also be ascribed to a similar motive of the irresponsible and irrational drive for war, driven by a similar agent, in this case by the military-industrial complex (designated as such by Eisenhower), fueling the senseless war in Vietnam plauging local forests with defoliant, contaminating atmosphere with nuclear fallout, and ultimately threatening the annihilation of humanity in a catastrophic nuclear war. At the same time, the reception of environmentalist

thought by the anti-establishment movement also imbued it with a sense of solution. This was the creation of an alternative discourse and counter-culture in the first place, but also the creation of alternative communities and ways of life, protest, and ultimately the vision of liberation—from the negative effects of technologies, waste, pollutants, ideological manipulation and the physical seclusion from nature. All of these strongly resonated both within the Hippies community and the 1968 students protest movement, which swept through the Western industrialized nations and adopted the environmentalist program in its specific dimensions (Gottlieb 2005, 134–140; McCormick 1989, 61–64).

Finally, the last theme of the analogies between the war on humans and the war on nature, coalescing in the apocalyptic vision of the nuclear war (the ultimate environmental catastrophe), may be related to the third discursive framework that entered the field during the 1960s. This was the notion of concrete and imminent threat posed by environmental problems, one which inevitably heads towards a global catastrophe. This was incorporated into the cluster of environmentalist imaginaries from still a different and, for some, perhaps unexpected direction: the application of systemic and rationalizing approach to society, based on the use of statistics and aggregative models attempting to predict the future course of global development. At its outset stood a question that had a longer tradition of causing controversies among economists: the *population*. The concerns about the potentially unsustainable growth of the human population go as far as the 17th century, yet were mostly popularized by the work of the British pastor and economist Thomas Malthus (1766–1834). Malthus, in his *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798/1803), proposed a simple idea that societies tend to multiply exponentially during periods of abundance, creating an unsustainable strain on the merely arithmetically growing production of resources. To avoid the effect of natural checks on population growth like hunger, disease, and war, he claimed, it is instrumental to apply population policy (McCormick 1989, 69–70). Malthus' ideas, which since then entered into various debates in economic and policy-making cycles, eventually found a strong reverberation in the environmentalist debates of the 1960s. The arguably most influential discourse in this regard came up with the publication of Paul R. Ehrlich's book *The Population Bomb* (1968). This was openly alarmist, predicted exhaustion of food production

capacities in the near future compounded by further unsustainable pressure on natural ecosystems (like fisheries) and argued for stringent population control measures. Ehrlich's book stirred controversies, not least in the form of the debate with another well-known environmentalist of the time, Barry Commoner, who strongly criticized his opinions, stressing the role of overconsumption and unsuitable technology in the genesis of environmental problems rather than that of the population (see Commoner 1975; see also McCormick 1989, 69–73).

A similar attempt to provide a systemic explanation for the environmental maladies came in 1968 with the publication of (still widely repeated) Garrett Hardin's argument about the „Tragedy of the Commons“ (Hardin 1968) pointing out the paradoxical element of rationality (i.e., on the individual level) accompanying the destruction of commonly owned resources and arguing for the regulation and enforcement of responsibility (cf. McCormick 1989, 73). Finally, the fears of the inevitable encounter of systemic environmental catastrophe stemming from the combination of demographic and econometric trends and mechanisms found their expression, supported by the authority of a purportedly exact calculation and scientific prediction, in the publication of *The Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al. 1972), based on the outcomes of modeling run by a group of scientists from MIT and predicting that the balance between economic and demographic growth will collapse at some point in the 21st century, unless a resolute action is taken in near future (see McCormick 1989, 74–77).

In the pessimistic and in some aspects clearly, exaggerated (but in their logic not completely wrong)<sup>73</sup> predictions of Ehrlich, Hardin, the authors of the *Limits of Growth*, and still others (the so-called “Prophets of the Doom” and “New Jeremiahs”) provided the new environmentalism with the ultimate horizon upon the backdrop of which all the other motives could be localized and meaningfully connected into the new and still largely relevant *paradigmatic notion of man, the environment, present and future*. Within it, this new horizon became *humanity as a whole and the planet Earth as its ultimate and only habitat*, expressed in the title of the synthetic UN-sponsored volume edited by Barbara Ward and René Dubos, *Only One Earth* (1972) as well as popular chants during the Earth day on April 22,

---

<sup>73</sup> Notably, the debate on the substance of the 1960s/1970s predictions of ecological catastrophe would continue for a long time (see, e.g., Turner 2008), now being overshadowed by the prevailing focus on the climate crisis.

1970 (cf. Gottlieb 2005, 148–158), on which around ten millions of US citizens joined public gatherings and protests across the country to demonstrate their concern and interest in the newly discovered political and social agenda.

As it has been shown, the new environmentalism arose from heterogeneous motives. These ranged from Carson's documentation of the ability of man to disrupt major ecological mechanisms in a hitherto unknown way, the fear of industrial accidents and catastrophes by which anyone can be affected, to the specter of nuclear war, the fear of exhaustion of resources and unpredictable effects of new technologies, the population growth, damage of health and decline in quality of life as well as the ultimate possibility of the destruction of conditions of life and flourishing of human civilization itself. These motives, though, eventually coalesced into one integrating motive: *the environment* (or *nature*, for that matter), spanning over *one planet*. Over a relatively short period of time, the totality of nature on Earth thus ceased to be the „thing outside,“ available for unlimited exploitation and settlement. In a primeval move towards what can be defined as the *ecological worldview* (Krebs 2008, xvii), it started to be perceived as a finite, interconnected, and ultimately fragile system that could not be further ignored and excluded from the social and political calculations of modernity. At the same time, this does not mean that the early surge of the new environmentalist imagery of the world would somehow solve the problem of man's relationship to nature and the environment. It rather, as it will still be discussed in the following chapters, opened a new field of inquiry and set the ground for the new domain of both discursive and non-discursive practices that occurred essentially as a reaction and response to the newly discovered notion of the total environment and ever-present possibility and reality of the environmental crisis and that still keep to compete with the *economic world view* and many environmentally harmful practices (see Krebs 2008, xvii).

As the historical analysis put forth in this work will consistently try to document, this basic understanding of *the environment*, *the ecological* and the effective acceptance of the *ecological worldview* is also the persistent framework actualized in the texts on Islam and the environment. Before looking in more detail at the emergence of the specific *Islamic* response to this fundamentally

modern problem, let me make a last detour and look briefly at the relationship between the environmentalist discourse and religion in general.

### 3.1.2.c *Religion and the Environment*

Human thought about nature is presumably as old as humanity itself. Nature is, and often in a dominant way, represented in all the cultural systems of which we have any knowledge, whether through archaeology, preserved elements of mythology, or comparative cultural anthropology (see Feyerabend 2016, 5–33). While Emile Durkheim famously declared social relations to be emerging within the course of the collective life of society to be the source of the sophisticated human intellectual life, particularly thinking in categories (1995, 8–18; see also Douglas 1986), a different hypothesis (though both are, in fact, not mutually exclusive) places their origin in the context of the human interaction with natural phenomena, particularly those parts of “nature” which are being gradually utilized by “culture” throughout the course of the human cultural evolution—like fire, movement of celestial bodies, agricultural crops, metals and others. In other words, it is the life in nature, and especially its more sophisticated manipulation and cultivation, which is mirrored by the structure of human culture, including in the realms of language, religion, philosophy, and eventually science (Feyerabend 2016, 22–26). From this perspective, it is not surprising that nature dominates the oldest known religious systems and presents (notably in the form of depictions of animals) the central theme of many of the oldest preserved works of art.<sup>74</sup> And, obviously, also newer (the so-called “axial”) religious systems, even if they tend to abandon reverence of natural objects in favor of more distant, ultimate, and “transcendent” reality, refer to nature extensively nevertheless. Such has also been shown to be the case of the Qur’an (see 2.2.2).

What is certain as well the human thought about nature, whether it has been practically oriented, conveyed by the myths seeking to provide answers to the question of the origin of the human condition, or focused on the unraveling of the true “essence” of nature through metaphysical speculation or scientific method, has varied throughout the time and place and changed in the course of

<sup>74</sup> Like the Epos of Gilgamesh (cf. Hughes 2005, 39–40, 189) or Lubang Jeriji Saleh, Lascaux and Altamira paintings.

human history. The seminal work of Clarence Glacken (1967), which remains a basic reference source up to this day, in a useful way, categorizes human thoughts about nature on their most abstract level. In his view, the basic approaches (apart from the immediate, practical knowledge of nature which has been continuously sustained by those who cultivated, processed, or utilized it for human needs like the hunters, husbandmen, craftsmen, sailors etc., but also to a varying degree by any other member of human society)<sup>75</sup> are three.

The first (1) concerns the question of the *origin of nature*, especially in relation to its apparent suitability for human (and also that of other forms of life) sustenance. For the greater part of history, this question was answered most extensively through mythology, embracing in some form or another an idea of the purposeful design of nature and the environment inhabited by humans (Glacken 1967, vii). Obviously, as such, this idea is presented by the Biblical book of *Genesis* (Gn 1:1–25) and principally in the same way also in the Qur’ān (see, e.g., two passages in one of the earliest revealed suras of ‘*Abasa* and *al-A’lā*, 80:24–32; 87:1–4; this theme has also been debated above, 2.2.2.c), stating that nature, standing along man himself, was created in “good” shape by the one omnipotent God, one of whose most important attributes is to be the Creator (*chāliq*) of the world. The second (2) category of ideas about nature is tied to its influence on humans, ascribing to a particular climate or topography an effect on individuals and societies. Glacken refers to this second idea as one of *environmental influence*, which can be traced back at least to the ancient Greek culture, especially medicine (1967, vii), from where it was also passed further, not least into the medieval Islamic tradition (Avicenna and Ibn Khaldun are the most prominent examples of this influence; cf. Saljuq 1973). Finally, the third (3) category of ideas then concerns the role of man in altering the environment or man as a “geographical agent” (Glacken 1967, vii–viii).

As is shown by Glacken, especially the first two of these basic ideas can be documented from the very beginning of literary culture in the Sumer period (1967, 3–7) and permeated the Western canon (to which Glacken’s work is admittedly largely limited). Together with this general framework, a couple of

<sup>75</sup> Partly identifiable with what Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 361–374) characterize as „minor“ or „nomad“ science, or alternatively as *skills* or *know-how*. As DeLanda (2016, 79–80; see also Feyerabend 2016, 26–33) points out, there has been a long-term disregard for these forms of practical knowledge in contrast to the „higher“ forms of speculative treatment of nature.



other more distinct ideas that proliferate in various concrete articulations throughout the premodern world can be mentioned. Among these are: (a) The presence of order in nature and its perception as a “cosmos,” i.e., purposefully ordered whole (Glacken 1967, 4, 15–17). (b) Particularly diverse and developed conceptions of evolution and alteration of human existence in nature, including the imagery of a past period of a “golden age” or alterations of life in harmony and abundance and peril and scarcity (6–7). (c) Theories of natural origins of diseases as well as of particular characteristics of given peoples and cultures developed by the Hippocratic school of medicine as well as Herodotus’ history, gradually connected to Empedocles’ influential scheme of four basic elements through the humoral theory preserved, not least given the influence of the medieval Islamic philosophy on the early modern European science, well into the 18th century (7–12). (d) The vision of the “domestication” of nature and its appropriation to human needs (often regarded in a teleological way as preordained by the order of creation and man’s role in it, rendering man the partaker of the process of creation and agent of its refinement and completion [Glacken 1967, viii, 13–14]). (e) The idea of unity and interconnectedness of nature, as well as of the parallel between the macrocosm of nature and human microcosm, incentivized primarily by the regularity of astronomic phenomena and developed by eminently important astrological theory (to which Glacken refers as an “astrological natural law” [1967, 16; see also 17]). (f) To these can be added the most general idea of separation between man and nature, to which others, like city vs. country and nature vs. art, are embedded (Glacken 1967, x). (g) Lastly, premodern thinking seems to present the human interrelationship with nature predominantly as being given and steady. This steadiness is expressed by Glacken by an ideal-typical example:

Man, for example, lives on a divinely created earth harmoniously devised for his needs; his physical qualities such as skin and hair, his physical activity and mental stimulation are determined by climate; and he fulfills his God-given mission of finishing the creation, bringing order into nature, which God, in giving him mind, the eye, and the hand, had intended that he do (Glacken 1967, viii)

Ideally, at this place, it would be convenient to include a passage (and perhaps a chapter) on the history of the ideas of nature evolving specifically in

*Islamicate* history and perhaps also those occurring in the more limited context of religious (or the Qur’anic) sciences (*‘ulūm al-Qur’ān*). Such undertaking would be, however, problematic for two reasons. First—a sad observation to be repeated again—the environmental history of Islam has not yet been written (see above; Mikhail 2017, 14), and this counts equally so for the intellectual, environmental history which, perhaps with the exception of Sara Tlili whose work will be yet again discussed later (6.2.2.c), does not exist as a discipline, field or a problem. As it has already been stressed, it is out of the scope of one individual work to bridge this gap—and much less so of a work dedicated to the *modern* and contemporary environmental history of Islam. Still, there is also a second and more substantive reason not to attempt to chart and include the older intellectual environmental history of Islam here. This lays in the arguable necessity to clarify first the rationale and the conceivable position of such a field of inquiry within the current state of thought on Islam and the environment that inevitably influences it in the form of presuppositions and pre-conceptions. In this sense, the environmental history must be written from the present, not the other way around.<sup>76</sup> And finally, to these two more substantive reasons, a third may still be added. This comprises the potential limited relevance of the pre-modern conceptions of nature for our contemporary period as both domains are separated from each other by considerable epistemic shifts. Although the older conceptions of (1) ideal design and (2) environmental influence can be well actualized nowadays (as it will be shortly seen), they are still, in most cases, embedded in the more dominant and decisive framework of “geographic agency” (3). In this regard, it is necessary to consider the role of modernity again, which, apparently, brought a profound shift in cognition and categorization of nature.

Viewed through Glacken’s categorization, the advent of modernity in the West caused the first two dominant categories (origin in design and environmental influence) to be effectively dismissed.<sup>77</sup> In contrast, the third idea of mankind

---

<sup>76</sup> In this regard, it is useful to note that the study of the history of human thinking about nature, in general, has been long neglected in the field of intellectual and cultural history; not incidentally, it has more extensively developed (though with some notable exceptions like the work of Lovejoy; see 1936) only with the rise of environmentalism as a mainstream social and cultural movement. In this sense, it was only after the environmental *present time* would become a subject of inquiry that environmental *history* could emerge.

<sup>77</sup> The design theory gave effectively way to evolutionary thought. The theory of environmental influence (still popular in the 18th century and appearing, e.g., in Montesquieu’s *The Spirit of Law*; cf. Glacken 568–581) failed to provide persuasive empirical proofs of causality between

exerting influence on their geographical and environmental surroundings (which remained rather undeveloped up till the modern age [see Glacken 1967, vii]) steadily evolved and gained, as it has been shown, largely universal acceptance with the environmentalist revolution (see above). In another and a bit schematic interpretation, while *classical modernity* attacked the older conceptions of nature with an aim to substitute them with one overwhelming principle—that the mechanisms of the functioning of nature are subject to scientific methods and only them—the *environmentalist modernity* keeps coming to terms with the fact that man has become—and largely through the purportedly ‘objective’ cognition of nature through science—an environmental agent, actively transforming and interacting which what was supposed to be an “inert” object of his knowledge.

What role did and could religion play in this shift? Eventually, the answer to this question can be, at least, provisionally generalized. As it is very much apparent, the modernist shifts in the view of nature were not “to the advantage” of the ingrained religious thinking as they (particularly through the evolutionary theory and the physical cosmology, which ultimately contravened the idea of the ideal design) shook the main building blocks of the religious view of the world, and—even more inexorably and consistently—virtually exempted the question of nature from the purview of religious speculation. In fact, the sequestration of the virtual monopoly within the area of the *interpretation of nature* must be seen as one of the significant components of the modern process of *secularization* (cf. Taylor 2007, 323–324).

At this place, it would be equally convenient to mention the history of Islam, but it will be, on the grounds already explained above, omitted. Instead, I will focus on a question that will become shortly relevant in discussing the texts of Muslim authors: what role did religion play in the above-described environmentalist revolution in the 1960s? By multiple measures, the paradigmatic shift brought about by the spread of the new environmentalism that swept through (initially) the Western societies from the 1960s on did not have at its outset any noticeable strong relationship to religion, at least if we consider it (as this work generally does) in its more restricted sense as faiths and religious traditions of the older origin. Even though religion has been shown to have a significant say in

---

natural environment or climate and culture.

human conceptualizations of nature throughout long periods of history, this clout has been largely undone at the time when the notion of ecological crisis in the 1960s emerged. Moreover, the environmental problems of a large scale and a qualitatively new character that elicited the surge of new environmental concerns emerged first in the societies that, among other things, identified their „modernity“ with a systematic suppression of the normative influence of religion on their functioning. This suppression was by itself accompanied and, to a certain degree, conditioned by the conviction about the inevitability of the marginalization of religion and the waning of its social influence, which had its roots in the 19th-century sociology and various social philosophies (especially in Comte, Weber, Durkheim, and Marx) and later morphed into the so-called „secularization thesis“ which, incidentally, underwent its culmination in the 1960s and 1970s (just before being radically reassessed from the 1980s on [see Berger 1999; Swatos and Christiano 1999]).<sup>78</sup> Finally, the reflection on environmental problems and the initial expressions of new environmentalism departed largely from the discourses that were more or less antithetical to religion (the natural sciences and the socially progressive and sometimes revolutionary „New Left“; see above). In short, religion, thus, generally said, was not *the* societal force that would draw attention to ecological problems, and neither was it initially put in direct relation to them or asked about its “opinion” on them. Nevertheless, although the genuinely religious concerns were not part of the great environmentalist awakening of the 1960s, the liaison between the two discourses—the religious and the environmentalist one—was established relatively quickly. Neither this should come as a surprise. The new environmental awareness quickly spread to almost any kind of human activity—from engineering to literary theory (see Williams 1972; 1973) and religion was no exception. As is the case with other crucial developments in the field of environmentalism, the origin of the liaison reaches back to the 1960s.

The seminal text which is usually credited with establishing it, dates from 1967 and was published in the *Nature* journal by the American medievalist Lynn White under the title „The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis“ (see White

---

<sup>78</sup> It may be useful to note that the emergence of Islamic political and revolutionary movements at that time played a significant role in this process of redefinition.

1967).<sup>79</sup> White's article must be seen as both discursively significant and historically important. While its discursive significance returns to the fact that it introduced into the debate on environmentalism a substantially new motive and perspective, its historical importance lies in eliciting a further reaction and critique, which eventually gave birth to the debate about religion and ecology, the field of ecotheology as well as to, still more broadly, the environmental philosophy and even environmental history—to all of which it remains widely quoted as an incipient contribution (cf. McGrath 2019, viii; cf. Frodeman and Callicot 2009, XXII—XXIII; McNeil 2010, 350).<sup>80</sup>

Like in some other cases, Lynn White, a medievalist historian specializing in technological history by profession, can be seen as rather an unexpected actor in entering the debate with a radically new perspective. Indeed, White's article, once set in the mid-1960s context, must not be seen as extraordinary—joining the other voices, ever increasing in numbers, expressing their opinions on the issue of the environmental crisis. Paradoxically, its influence may be an inadvertent result of the controversial nature of its authors' argument. This, as the title already indicates, seeks to transcend the focus on the present reality of ecological problems (the delineation and understanding of which White largely shares with the more general debate [cf. White 1967, 1203–1204]) and look for their cause in the more distant past. White eventually finds this past in the field of his specialization of medieval Europe. In his view, it was there that the allegedly fateful “marriage between science and technology,” which enabled and drove the unprecedented modern intrusion into nature, originally emerged (1203).

In White's construction, this was not an incidental development. By contrasting what he refers to as a Judeo-Christian theology to older conceptualizations of time and universe, such as the Greco-Roman ones, as well as accentuating particular elements of the medieval Christian natural theology, White constructs a picture of European culture, which was allegedly more exploitative than in other parts of the world and eventually enabled the objectification and subjection of nature unhindered by any tempering moral concerns. Ultimately, White connects this primarily to one central motive: the

---

<sup>79</sup> Even though it, as it will be discussed shortly, stands along another text published at close to the same time by S. H. Nasr

<sup>80</sup> It is also reflected upon by more historically-informed writers on “Islam and the environment” (see, e.g., Gade 2019, 42, 207–210).

creation myth from the Bible in which “God planned all of [the creation] explicitly for man's benefit and rule.” (1967, 1205). This, according to him, established the central idea of the *dominion* of man over nature and other creatures, compounded by other concepts like progress, eradicating the older ideas of pagan animism, and imparting nature with its own power and agency. The medieval Christian natural theology (albeit only in its Western form) then, according to White, progressively took the form of “discovering how his creation operates” (1206), which gave the Europeans a gradually greater understanding of natural phenomena and processes and enabled the modern scientific revolution through Baconian and other ideas. In this way, the ecological crisis of the 20th century gains a concrete *explanation* in White’s presentation: within that, Christianity “especially in its Western form [...] is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen” (1205) and “bears a huge burden of guilt [i.e., for the current situation]” (1206).<sup>81</sup>

Upon first sight, it was this controversial accusation that determined the most immediate reception of White’s argument, not least among Christian authors who rushed to bring in an alternate view of their traditions’ theology, eventually establishing an important trend that I will mention in detail in Chapter 6 (6.1.1).<sup>82</sup> The focus on White’s hypothesis regarding Christianity—as provocative as (arguably) ahistoric and unprovable—should, however, not overshadow the more lasting and indisputable innovation that the US historian introduced into the environmentalist debate. This must be eventually seen in the central underlying

---

81 Admittedly, White puts forth an analysis of the medieval European scientific and technological history which is more sophisticated than this brief summary enables to demonstrate, and in fact, contains a number of relevant problems for the fields of environmental history and the history of ideas (e.g., the absorption of intellectual influences from other continents, not least Islamdom; the early application of watermills on an industrial scale, etc.). This, however, changes nothing about the centrality of the “religious” factor in White’s argumentation, to which the impact of his article also returns. It is also useful to note that White was not alone in his stance. Four years later, another historian, Arnold Toynbee, made almost an identical argument, extending the blame on all monotheistic traditions in which universe is created by God who is “super-human in power but is humanlike in the arbitrariness of his use of his power” and who “handed over to one of his creatures, man, all the rest of his creation”—adding a laconic question of whether “nature [has] no rights against this autocratic creator and against man, God's aggressive licensee?” (Toynbee 1972, 142–143).

82 It is important to notice, that either White’s or Toynbee’s position is not completely anti-religious. Both authors also finally look for some recourse in their articles: whereas White sees it in alternative expressions of Western-Christian spirituality, notably and proverbially the tradition established by Saint Francis of Assisi, more openly atheist and anti-religious Toynbee eulogizes pre-Christian and non-monotheistic forms of religiosity like the ancient Greek, Buddhist or Confucianist ones (cf. White 1967, 1206–1207; Toynbee 1972, 145–146).

assumption of his hypothesis, expressed by the author as follows: “What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny, that is, by religion” (1967, 1205).

As it is evident, White clearly identified through it a new hypothetical line of causality running towards the ecological crisis as well as a new horizon within which one could seek its solution. This is illustrated by authors’ own far-reaching conclusions, namely that the growth of “a dynamic technology and science,” responsible for the ecological crisis “cannot be understood historically apart from distinctive attitudes toward nature which are deeply grounded in Christian dogma,” that “since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, *the remedy must also be essentially religious*, whether we call it that or not” and that, overall, “we shall continue to have a worsening ecologic crisis until *we reject* the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man” (1967, 1207; my emphasis). By that, White established an important trend within environmentalist thinking, which is characterized by the rejection of straightforward solutions (like technological or administrative adjustments, activism, or return to the romantic past) and the demand of what must be, in concord with the author’s intention, ultimately called by the religious term “conversion,” affecting the deeply ingrained and unconscious beliefs and patterns of thinking which must be overcome before any solution whatsoever is possible. In this sense, White indeed figures as a founding personality for the very same inclination manifested in the prolific debate regarding environmental ethics, the movement of the deep ecology (initiated a couple of years later; see Naess 1973), or cultural critiques of eco-feminists like Carolyn Merchant (see 1982).

At this place, it is appropriate to move on towards the analysis of texts of Muslim authors, one of which, remarkably, appeared almost concurrently to White’s intervention and drew on largely the same assumptions—as it will be shortly demonstrated by a mutual comparison.

## **3.2 The Early Responses: S. H. Nasr, Z. Sardar, and P. Manzoor and Conceiving of the “Islamic Position”**

Based upon the above-presented context, it is finally possible to approach the theme of this work: the Islamic discourse on the environment. Obviously, the way to approach it leads through individual instances of this discourse—texts that approach the theme of the environment from the perspective of the Islamic tradition and expound it through its categories (the previous part finally enables us to more clearly define the subject—„the environment“ representing here the totality of the earthly natural world susceptible to systemic human influence and potential destruction).

In this chapter, I will begin my analysis by focusing in more detail on two texts that count among the earliest in addressing the subject. The first of them, published in 1968 by S. H. Nasr, possesses, with the most probability, primacy in connecting Islam with the theme of environmental crisis, even if in a way that must be seen as specific from the perspective of the later development of the discourse. The second, issued in 1984 as a contribution of an edited volume (see Manzoor 1984; Sardar 1984a), appears already in the period of the incrementally growing interest in the topic and possesses, thus, no temporal primacy (it is, in fact, predated by several publications and shortly followed by others; see Zaidi 1981; Ba Kader et al., 1983; Llewellyn 1982; 1983; 1984; Sardar 1985)—even if it still counts among early texts written from an original perspective and not following a particular convention (which is just at the process of building at the time).

The selection of these two texts is, at the same time, intentional as both of them will prove useful as exemplary material for examining the moral dimension of the discourse—which will be subsequently discussed as its main underpinning motive. As it will be apparent, this exemplary role ultimately returns to the form in which both texts are written: they are composed as direct and intentional reflections on the theme of the ecological crisis, focused on debating its causes and ramifications and applying to this debate a religious viewpoint



which is, significantly, expressed in dialogue with other perspectives—ultimately very much like it was typical for the early formative environmentalist debate. As such, they must also be distinguished from the other early Islamic texts quoted above, which often lack this polemic aspect and reveal a different register of motives and motivations (they will be discussed in chapters 4 and 6). In this part, I will focus on presenting the social context of their origins and condensing the substance of their argumentation. Subsequently, I will put them to an extended debate in the third part of this chapter (see 4.3).

### **3.2.1 S. H. Nasr, the Critique of Secularity and the Elaboration of the First Islamic Environmental Tennets**

Remarkably, only one year after the publication of the above-mentioned White's article in *Science*, the theme of the influence of religious commitments on the ecological crisis was addressed by another author of different social and institutional backgrounds. This author was a Muslim philosopher, religious thinker, and adherent of the so-called Traditionalist school of Iranian descent pursuing at the time promising academic career in the US, Seyed Hossein Nasr.

Nasr's book, *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man* ([1968] 1990),<sup>83</sup> can be seen as historically important in at least two respects. First, in an original and much more expanded and elaborate way, Nasr reiterated White's argument about the causal relationship between religious beliefs and cultures and ecology, even if, as it will be shortly seen, with largely different conclusions. Second, Nasr can be considered the founder of the liaison between Islam and environmentalism. This is not only because he, as an author of the early elaborate assessment of religious values as a potential redeeming force for the fight against ecological decay, was a Muslim (in fact, Nasr was, by his Traditionalist allegiance, a rather distinct Muslim thinker, very far away from any kind of mainstream Sunni or Shi'i orthodoxy) but because he was likely the first one to address the modern ecological concerns specifically through Islamic and Qur'anic terms. In the final part of his book, Nasr spelled out ethical frameworks

<sup>83</sup> Due to my inability to consult the original edition, I will subsequently work with a newer edition with a slightly modified title, *Man and Nature: Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man* (London: Unwin, 1990). Generally, I will refer to the book by a simplified version of the newer title, *Man and Nature*.

which, as he believed, would represent a more adequate attitude towards nature in each of the major world religious traditions. As a part of that, he also addressed Islam. Some of the later familiar themes thus surfaced for the first time in Nasr's book.

To assess Nasr's discourse itself, it is first useful to look at who Nasr actually was and within what milieu he published his foundational text. While Nasr clearly represents an extraordinary personality in the scholarship of Islam of the 20th century, and for some readers, his name requires no introduction, let me briefly recount his biography.

### 3.2.1.a *Between Tradition and Modernity*

Nasr was born in 1933 in Teheran to a higher middle-class intellectual Iranian family of highborn descent with ties to the Pahlavi court (his father was a physician to the royal family; meanwhile, "Seyyed" in Nasr's name refers to the descent from the prophet Muhammad). In line with the longer tradition among the Iranian educated class, he received a cultured upbringing from an early age, focused on the intimate acquaintance with the Persian literary culture and the metaphysically oriented, intellectually sophisticated, and mystically imbued philosophical speculation (a distinct legacy in the Iranian Shi'ism from the times of the development of the *Eshrāqī* school by Molla Sadra and others during the Safavid period) which was further enhanced by an openness to the Western influences penetrating Iran at the time in his family and access to the local intellectual elite of the interwar period (both facilitated by his father's high standing and intellectual prowess of its own right). Meanwhile, Nasr also apparently exhibited traits of a miraculous child. In the mid-1940s, after a family accident, he departed to the United States to continue his education at a high school and subsequently at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard, where he graduated successively in physics, geology, and geophysics and history of science in which he received his Ph.D. in 1958 as a first Iranian holder of doctoral degree from Harvard in an age of 25. Notably, it was also during his study in the US that he was introduced to the so-called Perennialist (alternatively Traditionalist) school, represented by personalities like René

Guénon or Frithjof Schuon to which he became attracted by his own inclination, intellectually identifying with it for the rest of his life. After his graduation, Nasr returned back to Iran, continued consultations with prominent Shi‘i philosophically-oriented scholars like M. H. Tabataba‘i, and took positions in the Iranian academic establishment, being quickly recognized as a distinguished voice in interpreting and commenting on Islamic philosophy and Sufism, not least in its intersection with the modern Western intellectual landscape. He also (not against the family tradition established by his father) pursued his career in collaboration with the ruling Pahlavi regime, taking part in the Royal family’s initiatives to promote a modernized version of the traditional Iranian culture (especially its “high” intellectualist strand), collaborating with other notable figures of Islamic studies oriented on the study of mysticism and trans-confessional spirituality like Corbin, Izutsu, and others. For that and other reasons, leaving Iran in the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution of 1979 was probably a good choice for Nasr, not least because he could easily follow up with his already well-established position in Western academic circles. Already from the 1960s and 1970s, he regularly traveled to the US, published in English, and participated in the development of the US academic establishment in the field of Islamic studies (see biographies in Chittick 2007; Nasr 2001; Nasr and Jahanbegloo 2010).

Nasr’s long career as a prolific thinker and author of numerous books and articles had already begun by the time of his graduation from Harvard. In most of them, he mediated his deep knowledge of medieval Islamic philosophy and mysticism to the Western readership, connecting them in a Perennialist vein to other traditions promoting personal spiritual knowledge and presenting it often as a timeless and redeeming wisdom, resolving the universal problems of human existence and speaking to eternal spiritual needs. His works like *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (1964), *Science and Civilization in Islam* (1968), *The Need for a Sacred Science* (1993), and many others are of lasting influence, at least to those willing to give credence to their sophic dimension; to that must be added many other works including translations and editions.

This clearly gives us some basic context for Nasr’s work on the environmental crisis. There are a couple of facts which stand out. Nasr published his *Man and Nature* in 1968. This was two years after he delivered his thoughts as

a part of the prestigious Rockefeller lectures at the Chicago University, subsequently edited for publication. This means that he took an interest in the theme and decided to address it at a relatively early stage of his career (he was 33 in 1966). He did so in the United States, where he recently finished his doctorate and where other of his early influential works were being published at the time. Necessarily, Nasr was also subject to the influence of the environmentalist debate in the West at the time. In distinction to the American and British academic historians who were firmly entangled in the secularist tendency of their period and treated religion as a distant (if still consequential) historical force (and in distinction to other numerous voices who did not consider religion in the debate of the ecological crisis at all), Nasr brought up an opinion anchored in an almost completely opposite world view, clearly conditioned by his upbringing and the personal conviction stemming from his Traditionalist allegiance (and characteristic also of the rest of his intellectual project). From its perspective, religion was the only source of truth, and it could only be through a deviation from it.

Finally, Nasr devoted to the problem, which he definitely personally regarded as crucial, about two hundred pages of an elaborate, complex, and intellectually demanding argumentation. I will now present its main points, which I will, for the sake of analysis, split into two sections, with one focusing on the diagnosis of the roots of ecological crisis and the second on the remedy proposed by the author.

### 3.2.1.b *Diagnosis*

If we would seek the defining theme of Nasr's book, it would not be hard to decipher it. Easily identifiable already from the title and the first pages of the text, it is signified by the notion of *crisis*. As such, *Man and Nature* must be seen as following a long-established tradition in intellectual history—one of observing an impasse, a state of danger, confusion, and reckoning, bewildering a particular community or human society as a whole. Obviously, this crisis occurs between *man and nature*. But how does Nasr define it?

The answer to this question can be given on two levels. What is perhaps most significant for the first one is that, for Nasr, the crisis is largely *obvious* and requires no explanation. In a couple of introductory pages of his treatise, the Iranian philosopher does not go into much detail—but the less detailed and explicit his observation is, the clearer the contours of the final picture he paints—and this in particularly dark colors. “There is nearly total disequilibrium between modern man and nature” (Nasr 1990, 20; see also 19), he observes, so that “harmony between man and nature has been destroyed” (20) and “all man’s apparent victory over nature” is threatened (19), together with his dignity and even existence (18). Significantly, for Nasr, this situation of danger and peril *needs no elucidation* as its *symptoms* are apparent and ubiquitous: “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 by means of the machine and its products” (ibid.), “the possible consequence of war which modern technology and science have made total” (17), and “the creation of an artificial environment from which nature has been excluded to the greatest possible extent,” causing and intuitive feeling of “a lack of something in life” (ibid.)—this all stands side by side, signifying the apparent crisis.

Eventually, Nasr’s language of familiarity may vindicate the lengthy introduction in the previous part of this chapter. The mutual comparison of the discourses shows that the detailed explanation was not necessary on Nasr’s part: the themes described by him closely follow the register of anathemas of the 1960s environmental movement, and this also partly holds for the overall atmosphere of doom. The brevity of Nasr’s description of real environmental problems though has also another and less apparent significance. It is already by it that the Iranian philosopher evinces to his audience that the actual point of his interest will be different. And Nasr is outright in stating his intent—and that is to seek the “underlying” and “profound intellectual and historical causes” that, in his opinion, few have sought so far (17). It is also here where the clear analogy with White’s (1967) statement can be seen for the first time. Simultaneously, the “intellectual and historical” causes take us to the second level of Nasr’s definition of crisis.

Equally as for White, this “underlying” level is connected to man’s inner posture: the practice of unrelenting domination of man over nature and its exploitation by technological and scientific means ultimately return to the fact that there is no barrier to such exploitation and that it is tolerated and sanctified by the general lack of appropriate moral status of nature, which is conceived as a mere arena of realization of human will (cf. Nasr 1990, 17–20; White 1967, 1205). Here, though, also begins the basic difference. Whereas White ascribes this domination to the historic ethical posture (the idea of dominion) inscribed in the Christian tradition, for Nasr, the problem is rather different. It is the lack of any ethical posture whatsoever. And for it, according to the author, religion can hardly be blamed, as the fault is elsewhere, and this is what may be perhaps best defined as *modernity*—at least once a closer specification and discrimination is added (after all, also White and Toynbee blame modernity in their own way as anyone else).

In this regard, it is perhaps most important that Nasr, along with its character of a senseless and anonymous historical process, ascribes to modernity its own underlying intellectual motive and posture (not unlike that which White ascribes to the Christian tradition), which stands at its roots and in its development as a source of causation and a moving spirit. The basic distinction separating the pre-modern worldview from the modern one is ultimately identifiable with the embrace of religion and its revocation—at least as far as Nasr’s specific notion of true religion is concerned. This comprises the application of the holistic, metaphysical perspective of the world, which is appreciated as the Universe or cosmos, and which “speaks to man and all of its phenomena contains meaning” (Nasr 1990, 21). From a pre-modern<sup>84</sup> perspective, grounded in religious outlook, all realms of reality are essentially connected and meaningful in relation to each other, so that no “nature” as a completely independent entity does not in fact, exist, as it cannot be separated neither from its transcendental origin nor from the symbolism which it conveys while serving to man as a source of knowledge about the ultimate reality of being. Especially, this last link also establishes the inherent sacredness of nature—along with everything else and the “very stuff of the Universe” (ibid.). In this sense, it could be said that even the Biblical doctrine of

---

<sup>84</sup> Significantly, this definition does not hold just temporal, but rather substantive meaning for Nasr—return to premodern is an ever-existing possibility.

“dominion” singled out by White (put aside that Nasr would obviously hardly ever agree with White’s interpretation of it) would fulfill Nasr’s criterion for a positive metaphysical doctrine in the sense that it still maintains the origin of nature in God and therefore its inherent value in relation to transcendence. In contrast to that, intellectual and scientific modernity establishes, according to Nasr, a view of nature that is much more malign than any notion of hierarchy between man, nature, and God: it is nature deprived of any metaphysical significance whatsoever, the materialist and physicalist nature of scientist and atheists in the form of senseless and meaningless matter a mere “thing, devoid of meaning,” (17) “facts, entities in themselves that are totally divorced from other orders of reality” (21). This derogation (in Nasr’s eyes) of nature subsequently opens it to modern manipulation and unlimited exploitation. This is, though, not the only thing achieved by modernity.

The modern culture, according to Nasr, supplemented this shift in the perception of nature with another malicious distortion, which added to the debasement of nature and its “secularization” (Nasr 1990, 21). This comprised of the shift in the perception of man, which became equally as severed from the cosmic order and put at the center of all things with a “complete freedom’ given to his “animal nature” (18) characterized by expansionist and dominating tendencies combined with sole reliance on rationalist reason bare of any spiritual experience. This “purely terrestrial man,” writes Nasr, then came to regard himself, in close relation with the development of rationalist approach to the world within modern sciences, “the measure of all things.” “No longer,” he adds, “was there a metaphysics and a cosmology to judge the truth and falsehood of what men said, but the thoughts of men in each epoch themselves became the criteria of truth and falsehood.” (68). According to Nasr, the modern man is lustful, he wants to use and enjoy nature to the fullest extent possible (18), and he is, above all, interested in quantity to which he reduces all the qualitative and symbolic distinctions in nature (21; see also 69). Hand in hand with this goes the spiritual emptiness and uprootedness of modern man, which is yet again compensated by his insatiable tendency to expand and conquer the earth and even space—a surrogate of what was once a spiritual and intellectual journey occurring in one’s heart and mind (19). This short overview of excerpts shows that Nasr, in fact, goes much further

in the analysis of what White calls “religious roots” (1967, 1207) of ecological crisis: this crisis does not comprise of one mistaken anthropocentric and domineering ethical posture—it is a pervasive crisis affecting all, the individual and collective, epistemological and ethical, aspects of human life. It is identical to the fundamental emptiness and decadence of modernity, which Nasr describes in a damning way. Indeed, it is not the ecological crisis that would be the main problem—it is, as the title suggests, the *spiritual crisis in modern man*, of which the former is but one of manifestations.

But how could this crisis occur? Again, like White, Nasr appends a historical analysis to his judgment. This attempts to document the shift from the premodern to the modern and single out the key points of the juncture that brought about the modern decadence. In this sense, Nasr distinguishes between two main tendencies or epochs: the first one, going back to ancient times, is that in which the sciences were integrated within cosmological and metaphysical doctrines and were understood in their substantial part as an uncovering of the integral meaning of reality in relation to transcendence (in concord with that, their practice was also seen as of spiritual significance [Nasr 1990, 53–62]. It was only a critical diversion from these tenets that brought the peril. Nasr situates this diversion to the European milieu, marked by the period towards the end of the Middle Ages and with the latter phase of the Renaissance, and sees three key elements of it. First, the *humanist* turn freeing purely human concerns from the limitations of theology, second the development of *skepticism* in philosophy, and third, the progressive marginalization and *eclipse of cosmological and occult sciences* (62–68). Upon these developments, the consecutive progress of modern science (in figures like Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton) and philosophy (in figures like Descartes or Hume) eventually finished the turn from integral cosmology to secularized sciences. As Nasr concludes: “The question now became the utility of knowledge for man, who had now become nothing but a creature of the earth with no other end but to exploit and dominate its riches” (71–72). The further development, which Nasr analyses, step by step, became thus allegedly locked in the general attitude sealed in the critical rationalist turn of the 17th century and comprises more or less mere varieties of its logical outcome of skepticism and



subjectivism, with only occasional and feeble attempts to reverse the tide and restore the spiritual and metaphysical significance of nature (71–75).

As it is now apparent, Nasr’s diagnosis of the crisis presents seemingly a strange combination. There are aspects of it that do not fundamentally differ from the relatively widely shared opinion presented in the previous part. This is the clearly negative valuation of many aspects of the modern philosophy and scientific culture and its objectifying, domineering, and exploitative stance towards the world—one for which many historical expressions testify and which keeps being entertained and criticized by historians and sociologists (cf. Macnaghten and Urry 1998, 10–11; Beck, Bonns and Lau 2003, 4–5). On the other hand, Nasr still goes much further in his critique, to the point that his vision can be seen as deeply conservative and even “reactionary.” In many instances, the Iranian philosopher includes into the ambit of his burning critique the very developments that are usually cherished as feats of modern culture—from humanism to individualism and, indeed, secularism—which must be seen as the chief force liberating (if also alienating) the individual from the unified and predetermined view of the world. While it is true that Nasr maintains that it is not science by itself that would bear responsibility for the crisis (but rather its vulgar and totalitarian extension in the form of *scientism* [Nasr 1990, 4; see also below]) and does not, in effect, demand its abrogation, his persuasion that science and rational inquiry should be subject to limits is apparent. Along the above-stated examples, one may notice his explicit rejection and critique of the theory of evolution (74, 124–127) as well as the suggestion that the “reason why modern science never arose in China or Islam is precisely because of the presence of metaphysical doctrine and a traditional religious structure which refused to make a profane thing of nature,” reversing the typical tide of the argument (cf. Lewis 2002) in a move which makes the Western arrival to modernity ironically a failure. This anti-modernist and, to a significant extent also, anti-rationalist position can perhaps be better understood once we take into consideration the eventual remedy to the crisis proposed by the author.

### 3.2.1.c *Remedy*

What is the solution and redemption from the current peril? For Nasr, it is no other than at least a partial re-turn of the modern development in the form of the renewal of the metaphysical knowledge of the past, with a central aim to regulate and rectify the scientific knowledge established by modern means. In this sense, Nasr's vision is deeply idealistic as it presupposes the "the creation of standards by which to judge the results and implications of different sciences; not to dictate to them, but to point out the boundary within which each science functions, and the meaning that its discoveries possess beyond those borders" (1990, 114) and believes in possible complementarity between the restored spiritual wisdom and the sciences: "a metaphysical science rooted in the intellect, revelation, and a philosophy of nature based upon it could provide both criticism and evaluation of scientific discoveries and hypotheses. The two would be complementary in as much as the modern sciences deal with detailed knowledge and metaphysics with the ultimate knowledge of things. At the same time metaphysics, being independent of science, could examine its presuppositions and act as its independent critic and judge" (119). Ultimately, the source of this return is to be sought in the living religious traditions that sustain the faithful teachings about man's position in Nature and the Universe, even though it is worth mentioning that Nasr is somewhat skeptical on this point and is no sense an uncritical admirer of religious institutions as he concedes that "well known theologians and philosophers have for the most part remained silent or have bent backwards [in the face of the modern appropriation and destruction of nature] in order to avoid offend the prevailing scientific mood of the day" (19).

Consequently, Nasr examines the religious traditions one by one, searching—and that is in their original revelations and source texts—for recurring patterns of, in his view universal, metaphysical truth (Nasr 1990, 83–106). Crucially, it is also within this framework that Nasr expounds a basic outline of the elements of the *Islamic* tradition, constitutive of the cosmological and metaphysical knowledge proposed by him as a spiritually redeeming and savior force. As a result, he produced what may be regarded as the true beginning of the Islamic discourse on the environment and the first outline of what would be later

frequently identified with Islamic environmental ethics and ecotheology. This is even though Nasr does not frame the Islamic doctrine primarily as a carrier of ethical messages but one of *knowledge*.

As in the cases of other traditions and as presumed by his critique of the modern regime of knowledge, he stresses its integral character: “an elaborate hierarchy of knowledge integrated by the principle of unity (*al-tawḥīd*) which runs as an axis through every mode of knowledge and also of being” (Nasr 1990, 94). Nature, in his opinion, appears in all of the different sciences (*‘ulūm*) of Islam in its different aspects: “For the jurists and theologians (*mutakallimūnz*), it is the background for human action. For the philosopher and scientist it is a domain to be analyzed and understood. On the metaphysical and gnostic level it is the object of contemplation and the mirror reflecting suprasensible realities” (ibid.). As he stresses, all of these approaches are yet connected to and derivative of the Qur’anic revelation and ultimately serve the quest for understanding the ultimate God-created reality. As such, they could never become (and in fact never were) “secularized” to the detrimental effect for understanding nature, rendering it a mere “thing” (94–95). Nature, the Iranian philosopher points out, is always understood in Islam in relation to man and God, as it presents a revelation in and of itself—standing along the written revelation. Here, Nasr actualizes one of the central motives which would later become well-established and frequently mentioned in the eco-theological discourse (see 2.2.2.f): nature stands along the “recorded Qur’an” (*al-Qur’ān al-tadwīnī*) as the “Quran of creation” (*al-Qur’ān al-takwīnī*), bearing the same importance for man. Accordingly, the very term for the verses (*āyāt*) of the revelation is used also to signify various natural phenomena in the Qur’an as “signs” (*āyāt*).<sup>85</sup>

Against whatever modern imaginary of nature (and significantly, also the prevailing environmentalist one), Nasr puts forth its different, and indeed traditionalist understanding, inextricably tied to the transcendental reality which is also the ultimate aim of human existence:

By refusing to separate man and nature completely, Islam has

<sup>85</sup> Corresponding to his reverence for Sufism, Nasr stresses that to comprehend the symbolic meaning of nature, one has to undertake the „hermeneutic“ or „esoteric“ (*ta`wīl*) interpretation of the Qur’an reaching its „inner“ (*bāṭin*) meaning. Such practice of interpretation also makes the revelation and scientific knowledge fully compatible. The ultimate aim of one’s spiritual path is to acquire a universal understanding of all things as the Universal Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*) (Nasr 1990, 95–96).

preserved an integral view of the Universe and sees in the arteries of the cosmic and natural order the flow of divine grace or *barakah*. Man seeks the transcendent and the supernatural, but not against the background of a profane nature that is opposed to grace and the supernatural. From the bosom of nature man seeks to transcend nature and nature herself can be an aid in this process provided man can learn to contemplate it, not as an independent domain of reality but as a mirror reflecting a higher reality, a vast panorama of symbols which speak to man and have meaning for him (1990, 95).

As for the second important element of Nasr's theology, this can eventually be more easily related to ethics. It delineates the relationship between man and nature in terms of mutual relationship and hierarchy. And in this regard, Nasr also diverts from the environmentalist common sense viewing, to the very least, with a suspicion the "anthropocentric" imaginary of human exceptionality. Against that (and not unlike many other Muslim authors, as we will see), Nasr maintains and asserts that man is a central actor in the cosmic drama, the one who is closest to God and (apparently alluding to the so-called *ḥadīth* of the Hidden Treasure)<sup>86</sup> through whom God comes to know himself as through his perfect instrument (Nasr 1990, 96). In this sense (and also, e.g., through the faculty of language, i.e., naming of all things of creation), man "occupies a particular position in this world. He is at the axis and center of the cosmic *milieu*" (ibid.). Yet even though being "master" and possessing "domination" over nature, this is not in any case in the sense of free license as the man "is given this power only because he is the viceregent (*khalīfa*) of God on earth and the instrument of His Will. Man is given the right to dominate nature only by the virtue of his theomorphic make-up, not as a rebel against heaven" (ibid.). Here, Nasr thus stipulates the second central motive of Islamic "environmental" theology, one of viceregency and stewardship, which will be yet discussed in this work a couple of times. Yet, instead of interpreting it as a mere tenet or commandment to be observed, he still adds an interesting twist to it. Believing that man and nature are intimately connected to the point that the state of nature reflects the inner state of man, it is the spiritual fall of man, his inner "darkness and chaos" which is reflected in the "disequilibrium and disorder" of the nature befallen by the ecological crisis (ibid.). In this sense, man's fulfillment of his duty and purpose

---

<sup>86</sup> Stating „I was a Hidden Treasure (*kanz machfī*); I loved to be known, so I created the creation in order to be known.“ On the significance of this *ḥadīth*, see, e.g., Algar 2012.

and the state of nature mirror one another and are expressions of the same cosmic reality. The Islamic Middle Ages, Nasr claims, prevented the detrimental state of the present age from occurring as the Muslim scientists, despite their extraordinary discoveries, remained always committed to the study of nature as an expression of desire for spiritual knowledge (Nasr substantiates this by their combined achievements in both science and theology or mysticism). In this sense, the return to the Islamic tradition, standing alongside other ones, is the only way to tame the Renaissance's and modernity's "thirst for causality outside the religion" and to redress the woeful state of the human inner and outer world (97).

### *3.2.1.d Nasr's Discourse from the Historical and Comparative Perspective*

As already mentioned, the position of Nasr's treatise within the context of the history of the Islamic discourse on the environment may be regarded as unique. With the most probability, he was the first Muslim thinker who attempted to come to terms with the problem of the environmental crisis, as defined by the new environmentalist thinking, from the religious perspective, and certainly, the first one whose work would be remembered and would leave a lasting influence. In this respect, it is useful to discuss two aspects of the text which are most characteristic of it. The first one is its *specificity* as a historically situated artifact, and the second one is, in turn, its capacity to express some more *universal* trends.

As for its specificity, this must be arguably largely ascribed to Nasr's role of a pioneer, a thinker who raised, in the context of the particular historical moment, a rather unconventional theme and connected two things that had been hitherto more or less separated. And this counts, as the near-synchronicity with White's publication (1967) shows, not only for the Islamic context but generally. Certainly, this singular role ultimately returns to Nasr's distinct personality and positionality as a social actor. As already apparent from the sketch of his biography expounded above, Nasr, at the time of the publication of his book, occupied the peculiar position of a thinker straddled between "two worlds." The first one was the world of his personal upbringing in Iran, still largely a traditional society (even if for already about a century contending with the effects of

modernization), conveying a strong sense of religiosity and cultivating a high religious culture with which he had a close and privileged contact. The second was the world of the epicenter of his professional career, which occurred in the United States, a society at the forefront of modernization and progress (and the problems brought by them), where Nasr succeeded in acquiring valuable credentials and qualified as a member of the intellectual elite. The concurrence of both of these worlds is certainly something that must be seen as defining his discourse.

It can be argued that Nasr's experience and education in the West enabled him to address the novel and immensely complex issue of the ecological crisis in the first place. As already mentioned, Nasr finished his doctorate at Harvard in 1958. In the decade that followed, he frequently visited the country where he lectured and published his early works. Needless to say, this was a period during which the environmentalist movement underwent a staggering rise in the US, and Nasr was both witness and part of its expressive and ideological atmosphere, concentrating at the university campuses and beyond, absorbing the peculiar historical conscience of the moment. And as it has been made apparent, this strongly speaks through his work. Like most the other early environmentalists, Nasr adopts the framing of the ecological crisis as an existential one, and, addressing the English-speaking intellectual audience, he does not even regard it necessary to explain this fact and the nature of the crisis—it is obvious. Along that, many other tropes and motives, like the notion of imminent and inevitable doom, the heightened dichotomies of *man*, civilization, technology, city, ugliness, aggression, and war on the one hand, and *nature*, spontaneity, prudence, acceptance, moderation, and life, even if they go modified in Nasr's discourse and maybe also nurtured by other sources, return to the familiar register of the period.

Added to that may be the more direct influence of Nasr's education. This focused, except for natural sciences, on the newly established and quickly evolving field of *history of science*, in which Nasr was schooled by prominent thinkers like Bertrand Russell, George Santillana, and George Sarton (cf. Nasr 2001, 16–17). Without it, Nasr would perhaps not have been able to develop his nuanced historical critique of the modern Western scientific culture, which is an important part of his argumentation and renders his whole position more coherent.

Finally, an important component of this critique must be seen in yet another component of Nasr's "schooling," and that is in the doctrine of Traditionalism, to which he was converted for the rest of his life. Arguably, it was this school—also a creation of the West—centered around unmasking the purported decadence and fallacy of Western modernity and subscribing to the cherishing of "Eastern" traditions as carriers of the eternal and universal metaphysical wisdom (see Segdwick 2004) from which Nasr drew inspiration and self-confidence for the assertion of the "other" part of his intellectual legacy—the resolute commitment to the religious faith and the strong conviction about its universality and superiority vis-à-vis the edifice of modern scientific knowledge and philosophical large-mindedness. Nasr's conviction in this regard was undeniably genuine and became, together with his concern for the problem of ecological crisis, one of his life-long commitments and characteristic components of his intellectual legacy.

*Discursively*, this confluence of heterogeneous legacies is clearly visible in the overall shape of Nasr's message. As for its distinct characteristics, what is evident in the first place is that Nasr's aspiration clearly was to provide a *universal* answer to the dilemma of environmental crisis, not a particular one, addressed to a specific community or creed (the cosmopolitan dimension was evident also on that in 1968, Nasr devoted to Islam only some five pages of his book). As it has been made apparent, Nasr does not stay short of relating the question to the more general philosophical debate about the universals of metaphysics and the meaning of human life. He develops his answer in dialogue with the canonical figures of the intellectual history of humanity, from Aristotle and Laozi to Bergson and Einstein—the minds that he addresses with familiarity as his peers and fellow-travelers in the spiritual journey of humanity. Hence also the style and overall framing of Nasr's discourse—published as a philosophical treatise in the global intellectual center of the US in the newly emerging *koine* of global learning in a dense and eloquent style and intended for an educated audience well-versed in the Western cultural canon. In this sense, it would be wrong to reduce Nasr's contribution to the expression of a particular identity, such as a Muslim one.

Closely related to that is the second specificity: the *cosmopolitanism* of Nasr's treatment of the question and his ability to engage in dialogue and polemic

with other systems of knowledge and belief systems (like science, philosophy, or secularism) to which Nasr, even though he acquires a distinct position towards them, expresses intellectual respect manifested by his willingness to study them and hear out their arguments. From this also ensues perhaps the most distinctive aspect of Nasr's answer from the perspective of the Islamic discourse on the environment. This consists of the fact that, unlike most other authors, Nasr is not single-mindedly focused on Islam and neither gives it a status of singularity or precedence as he, along the Traditionalist lines, believes in the compatibility and conformity of *all religious traditions* (treating explicitly Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity along with Islam [cf. Nasr 1990, 81–113]) as far as the one and perennial wisdom is recognized in them.

At the same time, this does not mean that there would be no universal traits in Nasr's discourse. These, as will be further discussed in the following part, comprise three main ones. The first and most important one, which has been already hinted at in the previous chapter and which, as far as it is logical and expectable, should not be omitted to be made explicit, is the unequivocal belief in the *veracity* of the ethico-theological posture of Islam in relation to the themes of ecology, environmental crisis, and man-nature relationship. The second comprises the tendency to elaborate concrete theological precepts related to the man-nature relationship, which, as it has been shown, are represented primarily by the concepts of *tawḥīd*, *āyāt*, and *khilāfa*. Finally, the third is, even if again in a specific way, the belief in the ability of religion and religious knowledge to *reform* society and rectify the unwelcome ecological situation. As it will be further discussed, all these three traits form the basis of the near-universal structure present in the discourse.

Simultaneously, the focus on the discursive aspects should not make us oblivious to a couple of *sociological* observations—which ultimately return too to the singular configuration and circumstances of Nasr's positionality—that is, the positionality of the author through whose authorship the Islamic discourse on the environment (at least as it is defined in this work) emerged for the first time.

In this sense, it must be seen as highly instructive that this happened in circumstances and environments which were nowhere near purely “Islamic.” As already largely evident, Nasr was certainly not a *typical* Muslim thinker and



scholar but rather a child of the 20th-century cultural exchange and eclecticism. As stressed, it was his identity as a *nomad*, straddled between the two worlds of tradition and prestigious modern education, which enabled him to take a highly original view of the issue of the ecological crisis and provide his particular answer. Nasr's case thus makes for the first time visible something that will be further evidenced throughout other lines of the emergence of the discourse—that its origin can hardly be ascribed to one particular code or “essence” of Islam, but that it arises and proliferates in the situation of a *hybrid* identity and fundamentally of an encounter of the religious tradition with something external to it—its *detritorialization*. This, after all, also conforms with the inner structure of the discourse, comprising an *assemblage* of heterogeneous motives—equally as visible in Nasr's case. The fact (which may be seen as paradoxical but also not) that the first work of Islamic environmentalism was issued in the US shows, together with other circumstances, that the emergence of the discourse typically occurred in the *center* (and not the periphery) of modernization, and rather the high intellectual culture—in other words we deal here with more of an *elite* and top-down discourse rather than a bottom-up grassroots movement which would, for example, react on the concrete impacts of environmental problems on communities in Muslim countries. To repeat—most of these traits will be shown to be general.

Lastly, what remains to be discussed is the broader impact and legacy of Nasr's work. It is perhaps first useful to note that throughout his subsequent career, Nasr remained faithful to his original stance. In 1996, he devoted to the question of the man-nature relationship another book (see Nasr 1996) and regularly reflected on the theme also in his other works, in addition to becoming a speaker of choice to address the “Islam and the environment” topic in print collections of both academic and non-academic origin or interviews (see, e.g., 1992; 1997; 2000; 2003; 2007; 2015 and still others). As such, Nasr thus must be considered one of the main promoters of the ethico-religious reading of environmental problems as well as of the Islamic response to them in a more narrow sense, with his career now spanning more than 50 years. Compared to other personalities as well as other streams and layers of Islamic writing on the environment, Nasr's work also received a decent scholarly treatment and response

(see especially Quadir 2013; see also Mevorach 2015, Shah-Kazemi 2017; Bakar 2003; Bakar 2017; Beringer 2006; Wensley 1995; Sayem 2021a). Still, the reception and popularity of Nasr's work (which is also of a more recent origin) should not obscure its specificity (comprising of the Traditionalist and mystic underleanings) already discussed in detail, which naturally limits the suitable audience. This can be made, after all, evident by looking at the reception and influence of his seminal 1968 treatise.

Viewed from a retrospective, this was surprisingly limited. Despite its ambition and novelty, Nasr's message eventually did not exert an influence that could be expected from it and which he himself perhaps imagined to have. This concerns not only the imagined spiritual reform proposed by the author (the occurrence of which it would be overtly idealist to expect to take place) but also the emergence of a tangible movement that would coalesce around his ideas and carry them further. In fact, throughout the late 1960s and the 1970s, we see no such movement, and in this sense, it may even be justified to say that Nasr's message was "ignored" at the time (see Gade 2019, 207). Presumably, this can be ascribed predominantly to two main factors—the overall tone and framing of Nasr's work and the lack of a suitable audience for it. Both relate again to the author's personal disposition.

Since the beginning of his long and prolific career as a scholar and thinker, Nasr has consistently directed his philosophy towards and also found an audience for it, particularly in one distinct milieu: the educated and cosmopolitan intellectual elites of the Western academic sphere. After all, his lectures on man, nature, and ecological crisis were originally delivered at the Chicago University and later published in a standard academic form. Corresponding to that was their very shape and tone. Concerned with deep and abstract questions, evident even from the concise synopsis given above, they offered neither simple credo nor solutions to practicalities or adjustments in everyday life, except if one was prepared to undertake a serious individual spiritual journey. Nasr's discourse was focused on winning the hearts and minds of intellectuals and converting them to his own worldview rather than on mobilizing the masses. On a more practical level, the masses, especially in the Muslim countries, could hardly be influenced by it, as it was published in the US in the English language (the small and

marginalized Muslim diaspora in the West, at the time, was hardly a suitable recipient for it, too). The same ultimately holds for the other Muslim literati, *imāms*, and preachers, separated from Nasr by utter difference in social context as well as the very specific, mystical, and partially even heterodox (the case of Traditionalism) disposition of his ideas.

At the same time, Nasr did not fare much better, even in the West. Even though the intellectuals kept listening to him in areas connected to religion and spirituality out of the interest in the question, few of them would be eventually converted to his radical ideas departing from the basic modernist assumptions—and this was not in the direction of the newly emerging movement of postmodernism, but in the reverse direction of tradition and metaphysics. And even though the broader public was not uninterested in the religious and spiritual undertone of the ecological crisis, the elitist discourse of Nasr was even less suitable for addressing it than in the case of intellectuals—which can be illustrated in his strict rebuttal of the eclectic adaptations of eastern traditions or any other kind of innovated modes of religiosity which would divert from the strict boundaries of the “genuine” revealed tradition (see Nasr 1990, 74, 81). Needless to say, it was *this* kind of religiosity in which the counter culture of the 1960s (like in the hippies movement and the so-called New Age) would find its satisfaction (cf. McCormick 1989, 64; Gottlieb 2005, 147–148).

Eventually, once it became clear that the „dark prophecies“ of the 1960s would not cause an actual moral revolution, the solemn, admonishing calls like Nasr’s lost their momentum. This ultimately led to different expressions of both secular and religious environmentalism, more focused on applied and practical ethics of everyday life and promoting a slow reform and education in which every positive deed counts rather than a profound conversion with revolutionary outcomes. When, some 15 years after the publication of *Man and Nature*, the theme of Islam and the environment was raised again in a dozen texts of different origins, this notion of progressive betterment of the environmental situation and policy of minor (technological and social) adjustments already possessed a hegemonic position. Its impact can be illustrated in yet another example of the early Islamic writings on the environmental crisis, which is in the basic line of

reasoning remarkably similar to Nasr's but in other respects also notably different from it.

### **3.2.2 Continuation of the Debate on Islam, Modernity, and Ecological Crisis some 15 years later: Ziauddin Sardar's Cycle**

As already mentioned, in the 1980s, the theme of the Islamic attitude toward the environment eventually reappeared. This happened on the one hand through the activity of institutions (which will be recounted in the next chapter) but simultaneously once again in circles that may be designated as "intellectual" and, to some degree, resembled the environment that surrounded Nasr's work. This time, the main driving force was the work and publication activity of Pakistani-British intellectual Ziauddin Sardar, who, in 1984, issued an edited volume under the title of *The Touch of Midas: Science, Values and the Environment in Islam and the West*.<sup>87</sup>

Being still among the earliest published on the topic, the content of the volume may serve as yet another illustration of an expression of an "Islamic view" on the environmental problems unbound by convention (which did not exist at the time) and once again also relatively transparent in its argument due to the openness of the discussion. Of the volume, I will focus especially on the contribution of Parvez Manzoor (1984), who provides the most general and systematic treatment of the question of Islam and the environment. Upon it, I will illustrate both important analogies with Nasr's discourse, but also a couple of differences which, on the one hand, signify the inherent diversity of the discourse and, on the other, also may attest to some incremental shifts in the environmentalist discourse in general.

#### **3.2.2.a Sardar and the Islamization of Science**

As already noted, the mover of the particular publication activity was Ziauddin Sardar. The author was again a Muslim intellectual connected to the

---

<sup>87</sup> The book was originally issued by Manchester University Press. Due to the lack of access to this source, I used an Indian edition issued the same year in Mapusa in this study (see Sardar 1984a).

Euro-American cultural milieu and focused on the popularization and introduction of Islam to the anglophone public. The main difference seems to be that Sardar was a more nativized British resident who was raised, educated, and pursuing his career in the UK. The second comprises somewhat different intellectual allegiances. Unlike Nasr, an adherent of Traditionalism and child of the philosophizing and “mystical” Iranian *‘irfān* tradition, Sardar was, by his orientation, more of a representative of what can be described as the “Islamic modernism,” and more specifically, its moderate and intellectually open strand, accommodative to the liberal and enlightenment influences of modernity. At the same time, Sardar can also be described as less elitist and more willing to engage in public debate and address the broader public through media where, at the time, his views were in demand, as the British society with its post-colonial legacy and migrant communities was in a closer encounter with Islam, and one which started to be more widely debated at the time (see, e.g., Masood 2006).

Like Nasr, Sardar, together with his co-authors, approached the “environmental question” through its relationship to the realms of knowledge and science, although by drawing on a different philosophico-religious framework. This was the so-called project of the “Islamization of knowledge” (cf. Schwencke 2012, 12–13; Masood 2006, 6–7). Sardar emerged as a strong proponent of this trend throughout the 1980s, along with its other, still active promoters, like Muzaffar Iqbal and Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. On the most general level, the “Islamization of knowledge” may be equated with an effort to problematize the imaginary of strictly secular, “neutral,” or “objective” disposition of the circulation and processing of scientific knowledge and expose it as culturally contingent. According to its adherents, the “Western science” thus represents only a particular system of knowledge and epistemology forced upon the Muslim world throughout the preceding periods of modernization and cultural Westernization (Iqbal’s work on Islamic science and particularly the chapter on the colonial era elucidates well this problem; see 2009, 153–195). For the sake of emancipation and cultural rejuvenation of Muslims and Islam, a specifically “Islamic,” ethicized version of science should be devised. As noticed by Schwencke (2012, 13), this movement also reflected the critique of the notion of objectivity appearing within the Western philosophy of science itself (we have met one of the central

proponents of this critique, Paul Feyerabend in the introduction; see 1.2.2.a). The merit of the argumentation raised by the proponents of the “Islamization of knowledge” is also well summarized by Sardar himself and M. Husain Sadar in the introductory chapters of the 1984 volume.

As we may notice, as its point of departure—yet again—appears the notion of crisis, partially overlapping with the environmental crisis, but not limited to it. This crisis, in the eyes of Sardar, is largely a crisis of the production and application of scientific knowledge, the ability of which “to do a great good for mankind now seems to be overshadowed by an even greater capacity to do evil” (Sardar 1984, 1). Echoing the contemporary critique of the imagery of value-free, objective science (*ibid.*, 2), Sardar asserts the notion of science as a socially constructed and historically determined practice that may vary among historical communities and cultures (*ibid.*, 2–3). Consequentially, it is this pluralist, “postmodern” understanding of science that allows for examining the possibility of a specifically “Islamic” science to be established, not least through reviving continuity with the cherished medieval Islamic tradition.

The rest of the volume discusses this possibility in generally favorable terms. An imaginary of such Islamic science is provided in the programmatic chapter by M. Husain Sadar, who discards the contention that there would be a conflict between science and religion (a conflict which is, according to him, “a uniquely Western creation”; Sadar 1984, 15) as Islam and the Qur’anic message do not object to the pursue of knowledge by rational and empirical methods. Still, there is, in Sadar’s view, a significant difference from the prevailing paradigm in the Western scientific tradition, namely that in Islam, science does not supersede religion. “A conflict can arise,” writes Sadar, “when science and its method is made into an all-embracing value at the expense of other values of Islam. The pursuit of knowledge in Islam is not an end in itself; it is only a means of acquiring an understanding of God and solving the problems of the Muslim community” (1984, 22). Accordingly, “the scientist has” in this vision “a responsibility both towards God and the community and he or she will be accountable before God in the Hereafter” (1984, 23). The “Islamization of knowledge” may be then identified with an effort to ethicize science along Islamic terms—fundamentally as a response to its perceived misdeeds, like “genecloning,

genetic engineering and nuclear energy and armaments” (Sadar 1984, 17) as well as environmental harms, the specter of microprocessors and else (see Sardar 1984, 1–2).

The rest of the volume largely revolves around these questions, juxtaposing critiques of the contemporary scientific practice by Muslim and non-Muslim authors with propositions of how a specific Islamic science could emerge. It is in the context of this more general debate that two texts are devoted specifically to environmental issues (Manzoor 1984, Haider 1984). While the contribution of the latter author is focused especially on urban planning and architecture and comprises thus rather a specific case of the Islamic environmental discourse, it is the text of Parvez Manzoor, a geologist and professor of linguistics at the University of Stockholm and a long-term commentator on public affairs related to Islam, secularity and intercultural relations, which represents an example of a universal and to a large degree a programmatic statement through which, not unlike Nasr’s early treatise ([1968] 1990), the general traits of the Islamic environmental discourse can be illustrated.

### *3.2.2.b The Tenets of Islamic Ethics as a Way to Avoid Destruction*

Like other authors, Manzoor relates his text to the more general debate of the volume and also a meditation about the state and fate of humanity and modern civilization, which is characteristic of early environmentalism and evidenced, too, in Nasr’s pronouncements. Accordingly, he poses a question of to what degree this crisis is a manageable problem of improper use of technology and to what degree it comprises a deeper ethical and spiritual crisis which, in the words of the author, requires “fundamental revision of our own way of life, our cherished goals, indeed our very conception of ourselves and the world?” (Manzoor 1984, 150). The answer to the question is based on three interconnected premises.

As for the first, the Modern civilization is, according to Manzoor, characterized by mastery over nature and also a form of “technolatry” which sacrifices everything traditional on the “altar of modernity” (Manzoor 1984, 150–151). Significantly, although modernity is “Western” in its nature, there is no

fundamental difference between cultures nowadays as “every other contemporary civilization tries to emulate the West in the acquisition of the tools of this fearsome mastery” (150). Second, the ecological crisis reveals a crisis of this “might” and “mastery” of the modern civilization because it presents simultaneously a *moral* (the guiding ethos of “progress and meliorism” is put in doubt) and *existential* (the very survival of “man as a race” is endangered) threat, a threat which is at the same time insolvable by “technical,” i.e. Western, solutions (151). Finally, third, in a direct paraphrase of White (1967), Manzoor stipulates that “Ecological issues are, in the final analysis steeped deep in the moral and ethical consciousness of a culture: Ecology is a part and parcel of religious Weltanschauung” (151). Notably, Manzoor thus accepts White’s argument, which he is also informed about, apparent from the reference to the original text. He also does not challenge White’s hypothesis about the Christian culpability for the flawed ecological conscience. What he attacks is rather its extension to all monotheisms by Toynbee (1972; see above), complaining, in addition, to the overall ignorance of the position of Islam within this debate (ibid. 152–154).

This also reflects an important difference. Although Manzoor, in many instances, follows the argumentation elaborated by Nasr (i.e., mainly the attribution of the ecological crisis to the inherent contradictions and deficiencies of modernity), he at the same time diverts from it in one specific regard: he no longer situates the debate within the religion-secularity dichotomy like the Iranian philosopher but focuses more single-mindedly on Islam as a specific tradition. Islam thus, in his elaboration, presents a contribution and solution not by representing the broader universal “metaphysical” wisdom like Nasr claims but by speaking through its own language. As it will be later made evident, this shift is characteristic of the general development of the discourse, which, in its majority, essentially did not accept as guiding the distinction between Modernity and Tradition but progressively focused solely on the role of the Islamic identity. Second, the language of Islam is, in Manzoor’s view, less a language of metaphysics and universal knowledge and more one of ethics and values.

In this regard, Manzoor even implicitly admits that the Bible and Christianity *may* be ethically deficient. According to him, Qur’anic and Biblical stances on the subject of the environment are not identical, but, on the contrary, it



is specifically the Qur'anic (i.e., Islamic) "Weltanschauung" which extends its tenet of moral responsibility to the natural world. This, in the author's view, makes Islam a "particularly relevant ethical tradition," possessing a "solution to mankind's present environmental ills." (ibid., 154). Upon this basis and to sustain his claim, Manzoor, in the rest of his essay, also spells out a set of concrete Islamic principles intended to govern the man-environment relationship and "ethicize" human practice.

The first of them, *tawhīd*, basically corresponds with Nasr's assertion of the integral character of all knowledge and being. *Tawhīd*, rendering God the only creator and also the end of the world, ensues into a holistic worldview in which any aspect of reality or agency is viewed in relation to God and is thus "ethicized," so that there is also virtually no difference between religion and ethics, equally as between religion and politics, economics (a claim often repeated in different alterations as we will yet discuss) and ultimately also ecological questions and the perception of and relationship to nature, which, too, must be assessed in terms of morality and not mere utility (Manzoor 1984, 155–156).

The second principle deploys the terms of *khilāfa* and *amāna* as "anthropological" qualifiers, which (as we have also already seen) delineate the position and role of man through his moral responsibility and obligations. Man is—Manzoor agrees with Nasr—unique and highest of creation, gifted with discursive intellect (*‘aql*) and with the Revelation; at the same time, he is obliged to act in concord with God's will. The ground on which this obligation is "tested" is then the world of *nature* (which is at the same time orderly and knowable) itself. It is also nature (i.e., the earthly "theatre" for man's moral struggle) with which Manzoor identifies the Qur'anic concept of *amāna*, a "trust" given to man according to verse 33:72 (see 2.2.2.h). In this sense, man, although elevated above the rest of the creation, possesses nature only as a steward (*khālīfa*), which is also crucial for the understanding of his ethical role. Except for that, Manzoor also mentions the significance of nature as *āyāt* (signs), as we have already seen in Nasr (Manzoor 1984, 156–157).

As an extension to Nasr's treatment, Manzoor includes the third principle, *shari‘a*, as an integral ethico-legal doctrine (1984, 157). Manzoor qualifies *shari‘a* as a major contribution of Muslims to human civilization as it

presents an elaborate system of judging concrete action in all and any instances and in all respects concerning human life, a “problem-solving methodology” (158). Although he does not provide any concrete injunctions applicable to ecological issues, he asserts its potential to guide an environmental action and means of putting theory into practice. It is interesting to note that Manzoor’s view goes as far as to stipulate that the judgment of right and wrong covers all human action and that “to replace Divine Law with man-made stipulations causes only human misery as our ecological woes too flagrantly manifest” (ibid.).

Finally, the fourth general principle construed by Manzoor is *‘adl* and *i’tidāl*, “justice and moderation.” Manzoor points out the semantic and also substantive proximity of both concepts, with justice (reflecting the will of God) being the utmost moral imperative while moderation is the preferable way of its fulfillment. Manzoor contrasts the Islamic attitude to the supposedly life-negating faiths, stressing that the fulfillment of God’s will is to occur within society itself, with the main aim being the creation of a harmonious living (1984, 159–160). The principle of *i’tidāl* is also significantly connected to the harmony and orderliness within nature itself and directly implies, e.g., refraining from squandering (even though the “literalist” connection of this motive to the specific Qur’anic verses is not yet elaborated). “The path of ecological justice,” concludes Manzoor, “is paved with the ethical restraints of moderation” (160).

Finally, Manzoor adds a fifth general principle called “the sacramental earth,” which he deploys as his final argument for the merit of Islamic tradition in providing a basis for environmental ethics. Manzoor juxtaposes the Islamic view to all possible versions of rendering nature “profane” and its “debasement,” as nature, a creation of the transcendent God, always poses as a trust to man in which “signs” (*āyāt*) of God are present. In this sense, he contrasts it to any kind of ethics of domination and exploitation present in the current world, be it inspired by Christian or other attitudes (Manzoor 1984, 161)—and it is also the Western civilization itself that can benefit from these teachings (161–162). At last, Manzoor also accentuates what he renders the environmentally-friendly lifestyles of early Muslim societies (161–162) and concludes that:

For the Muslim World, the answer to the contemporary environmental

predicament lies in wholeheartedly going forward to the environmental ethic of Islam; in giving a practical shape to the environmental dictates of the Shari'a by producing legislations in such areas as pollution, conservation and urbanisation, and in abandoning the way of the West and returning to the environmentally conscious traditions and lifestyles of Islam (Manzoor 1984, 162).

By all standards, Manzoor's text must be seen as an important contribution, illuminating both the continuity and the gradual shifts within the discourse. On the one hand, it displays characteristics typical for the early phase of the discourse, visible also in Nasr's statement—this is its simultaneously polemic and meditative nature, which discusses the theme of “Islam and the environment” in relation to more general categories of science, civilization, and history—consciously connected to the broader “secular” debate, including by coming to terms with arguments put forth by other sides. Significantly, the role of Islam within this debate is also still not presented as self-evident—it is rather that the particular religious response is *searched for* within the tradition and presented as tentative and not definite. Corresponding to that, both authors include exclusively general concepts among their principles, signifying the integral character of the universe, the moral responsibility of man, and basic ethical principles of considerate conduct and moderation.

Still, Manzoor's treatment of the topic may be seen as different from Nasr's in some important respects and also as representing a particular shift within the discourse. While both Nasr and Manzoor consider the secular, rationalist scientific attitude, unaware of its limitations and implicit commitment to a particular ethical posture (the “mastery” and “control” of nature) as threatening, both authors offer a different kind of remedy. While Nasr proposes subjecting science to metaphysical (and essentially esoteric) knowledge, Manzoor offers a more pragmatic and worldly solution by subjecting it to an explicit normative system of ethical principles. This corresponds with the idea that the change ought not to be achieved through a change of mind in the first place but through an incremental and institutionalized reform in the practices of science, politics, economics, and education. Ultimately, modernity is to be embraced and can be rectified. Lastly, Manzoor (and this is an evolution from Nasr) establishes a tendency of clustering the “environmentally relevant” excerpts from the tradition

into “principles,” which are subsequently listed as specific categories—a shift that shows a progressive move towards what has been defined above as the virtual catechism (see 2.2.1) of the Islamic environmental ethics.

Making a final comparison, the strong analogy between the attitudes of Sardar and Manzoor and that of Nasr is evident, but there are a couple of specificities nevertheless. *Sociologically*, the intervention of the group of authors publishing in Great Britain occurring among a handful of texts on “Islam and the environment” all but confirms the observations made in the previous section about the tendency of the discourse to appear and proliferate in the deterritorialized condition of the Muslim diaspora and among the intellectual circles. Significantly, also the publication of the *Touch of Middas*, and even the reiteration of the same ideas by Sardar in his other publications from the period like *Islamic Futures: The Shape of Ideas to Come* (Sardar 1985)<sup>88</sup> and *An Early Crescent: The Future of Knowledge and the Environment in Islam* (Sardar 1989) failed to stir a tangible movement or a proliferation of the debate which would reach beyond the named individual contributions. The same fate also affected the discourse on the “Islamization of knowledge” that achieved very limited outcomes measured by its stipulated goals (see, e.g., Nasr 1991; Taner 2007, 201–238). What may be seen as telling is also the fact that neither of the authors involved in the original 1984 volume (and this is some of a difference from Nasr) developed a strong personal identity of “Muslim environmentalist.” Even though Sardar kept raising the theme regularly (see, e.g., Sardar and Masood 2006 91–107), the prominence of the topic in his public appearances was overshadowed by his other commitments. As for Manzoor, his contribution to the debate remained largely singular, with only one exception of a differently oriented text separated from the first one by 20 years (Manzoor 2003).

The situation of the field in the mid-1980s may be overall described as that the occurrence of the Islamic discourse on the environment remained negligible and scattered among largely disparate contexts. The emergence of a more sustained communication required, as will be shown in the following three chapters, a more resolute and systematic effort supported by a wider range of

---

<sup>88</sup> Quoting and lauding Manzoor’s contribution to the topic (see Sardar 1985, 63).

actors, which only started to appear and would still need a relatively long time to bring its outcomes.

### 3.3 The Quest for Morality: The Basic Motive of the Discourse

Above, I have analyzed in detail two texts, which count among the first, addressing the theme of ecology and environmental crisis from the Islamic perspective. I have also presented them in the broader context of the modern environmental transformation and the emergence of the environmentalist discourse (particularly in the form of the 1960s *new environmentalism*). The question now is: what do these earliest texts tell us about the themes and the overall structure of the discursive field? In fact, the oldest layer of the discourse may be illuminating in this regard as it, in many instances, represents a debate that is more broad and open than what would follow.

In this part, I will attempt to analyze some of the most general themes and frames appearing in the discourse and present a thesis that the most basic structure of the Islamic discourse on the environment can be best understood as a *moral response to the fact of the environmental crisis*. As such, this part will necessarily have to focus on the theme of *morality* within the discourse. What can be, though, understood by this term?

At face value, morality may seem to be identical to the term *ethics* and basically correspond to what has been already described above as one of the most widespread framing of the discourse, which simultaneously comprises the basis of its self-understanding and a quasi-explanatory framework—namely that the discourse is an expression of a particular normativity inherent in the Islamic tradition, which is able to provide an ethical regulation for the man-environment relationship and human treatment of nature (this is also what is later conceptualized within the discourse as the *Islamic environmental ethics*; cf. 2.1.2.b; 1.1.1.a). After all, such understanding is well represented in both above-analyzed texts, promoting the Islamic normativity as such a regulative and thereby also a cure for ecological dismay (see 3.2.1; 3.2.2).

In what follows, I will, however, propose a different explanatory framework. Within this, the moral dimension of the discourse will not be sought in

the moral and ethical categories related *specifically* to nature and the environment but in a much more general ethical and moral framework signified by basic valuations of good and bad. It will be argued that it is this basic moral disposition of the worldview transmitted by the Islamic tradition which elicits and necessitates the *moral response* to the ecological crisis. This, as it will be further discussed, also has significant consequences for the understanding of other, more concrete ethical categories present in the discourse as well as their actualization in other, less openly moralist contexts. In the first section of this part (3.3.1), I will focus on the basic logic and disposition of this moral response. The second section (3.3.2) will then attempt to outline its basic structure, evidenced in its various expressions across the field.

### **3.3.1 The Logic of the Religious Response**

As has been shown in the previous two parts, the introduction of the theme of religion into the context of the environmentalist debate occurred already in its early phase and almost simultaneously from two directions. Arguably, for the analysis of the constitution of the religious response, it is useful to return to the two early implicated texts of Lynn White (1967) and S. H. Nasr (1990/1968) and expand and elaborate some observations already made above. As it will be evident, their mutual comparison, even though they are written from remarkably different perspectives, will help us to better identify some of the basic assumptions on which the connection between Islam and religion ultimately rests.

#### **3.3.1.a *White and Nasr: Comparing the Secular and Religious Posture***

It is hard to miss that White's and Nasr's arguments about the origins of the ecological crisis appear primarily antagonistic. Whereas according to White (1967; the same argument would be later restated by Tyonbee [see 1972]), its origin returns to the tenet of dominion of man over nature inscribed in the Christian tradition and unconsciously preserved in the modern world-view, according to Nasr (and by extension Manzoor), the real source of peril is in

contrast the abandonment of the tradition (including in its anthropocentric and hierarchic aspects). This should, however, not make us oblivious to possible shared assumptions of both authors, ones which may be indicated by the circumstantial comparison made above.

What should be stressed first is that both authors eventually follow the same general framework in their writings, which is also typical of the 1960s environmentalism. And that is, in the first place, the effort to identify the ultimate source of the perceived crisis and imbalance affecting the man-environment nexus. As it has been shown above (3.1.2), this effort covered (and perhaps still covers) a relatively wide register of causes ranging from “material” practices (like the irresponsible application of new technologies) and spontaneous processes (the population growth) to ideas and ideologies (the meliorist irresponsibility and ignorance itself). Eventually, this may be equated with the (sometimes unsaid) goal of naming a culprit in humanity’s ecological predicament. Barry Commoner aptly and somewhat humorously depicts this tendency in his account of speeches given on the famous 1970 April Earth Day: „Some blamed pollution and the rising population [...] some blamed affluence [...] and praised poverty [...] some blamed man’s innate aggressiveness [...] a minister blamed profits [...] religion [...] technology [...] politicians [...] capitalism [...] everyone“ (see Commoner 1972, 1–10).<sup>89</sup>

When Nasr and White add to this debate on the issue of religion, it is important to note that they ultimately draw on a shared assumption, namely that religion may actually possess a causal significance in the development of the ecological crisis. This idea, apparently indispensable for the imaginary of Islamic (and other religious) *ecotheologies*, is, after all, fully expressed by the already quoted White’s dictum: “What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them” (White 1967, 1205). This assumption also provides a specific orientation, apparent in White’s treatment of the topic: the ecological crisis is not simply a calamity of negligence and ignorance, an easily solvable detour of the continuing civilizational and technological progress, and not even a product of explicit social or political

---

<sup>89</sup> For concrete quotations of the related propositions that succinctly cover the range of the potential bearers of guilt and the blameworthy of ecological decay (essentially valid up to this day), see the whole range of pages. In his allusion to religion („a historian blamed religion“), Commoner clearly refers to White’s diagnosis.



philosophies or doctrines (scientific, economic and others); it is an expression of deeper psychological motives and beliefs ingrained in the human mind by long-term cultural influences. White characterizes them as “beliefs about our nature and destiny” and identifies them with religion (even though terms like “spirituality” or “philosophy” could be used as well—hence also the relevance of White’s thesis for the field of environmental ethics). Consequentially, these deeper motives (and not the others) are also those that can provide a solution. Nasr’s work, as it has been made evident, fully shares this assumption. Also, he attributes the ecological crisis to the deficiency in the basic moral and intellectual attitude of man, which is predicated upon deep cultural roots.

This can be finally related to the difference between both authors: while White sees this attitude springing from the Judeo-Christian heritage of anthropocentric monotheism, Nasr starkly opposes this view and singles out the scientific and philosophical modernity as the clear culprit. This difference is, however, only relative. It is hard to miss that, in effect, modernity poses as a *creed* of its own in Nasr’s discourse, functionally analogical to White’s Christianity. Thus, it is not the *creed of monotheism* (cf. Toynbee 1972) that is guilty of the shared calamity, but quite on the contrary, the *modern creed*, doing away with the regulatory, moderating, and morally signifying forces of monotheism and other orthodox religions, which unleashes the wrong in man and is responsible for the dire situation in which humanity finds itself. In this sense, the theses of White and Nasr (in addition to Manzoor and the myriad of other authors vindicating religion) may be different on the level of *conclusion*, but their commonality on the level of *assumed principles* is hardly undone by that.

By postulating the causal significance of religious attitudes to human action and the state of the world, both authors render the debate on religion and ecology meaningful in the last instance. It is only on the basis of this assumption that religion can gain a significant role in fighting off the ecological crisis by virtue of its very causal role on man’s agency in relation to nature, and the basis of this role is to exert a moral influence on man to change his behavior. Such assumption may be contrasted in particular to the idea of a mere practical solution to the environmental problems either by technological or social reform or “engineering” (which both White and Nasr put in doubt; cf. White 1967, 1206;

Nasr 1990, 13) presents a natural presupposition for almost whole of the religious environmental ethics and theology as well as, as it will be shown in detail, the Islamic discourse on environment. This is even though its concrete modalities (particularly the interplay between various roles and significations ascribed to religion, its normativity, its collective and individual dimension, and its relationship to scientific knowledge and even modernity as such) may differ. In other words, it eventually makes little difference that White criticizes religion and Nasr venerates it.

This may be further supported by the fact that the influence of White's article derive ultimately not from the serious acceptance of his thesis about the culpability of Christianity (which can be virtually nowhere documented) but the fact that it incentivized religious responses focused on rebutting White's very argument—proving that the specter of aggressive, egotistic and vandalic nature-intruding man (endemic as an object of critique in the environmentalist-moral discourses) is not a product of religious attitude (an “aggressive licensee” of “autocratic creator” in the rowdy language of Toynbee [cf. 1972, 143]), but that religion is a positive moral force which is not only free of guilt but also endowed with the potential for remedy. What must be seen as historically significant, Nasr was probably the first who reached such a conclusion and articulated it in a consistent manner, taking, moreover, a position radically in favor of religion as the ultimate source of morality and environmentally positive values—this all apparently as his spontaneous posture and not as a counter-argument against White's accusations.

This, however, raises an interesting question: from where does the tendency to make the causal (and almost a “casual”) connection between religious commitments and the environmental crisis arise? Except the obvious answer, that it is the genuine presence of particular environmental ethics in religious traditions themselves (an answer which, though, suffers from lack of agreement on the substance of this ethics, among other things),<sup>90</sup> let me now discover a basic hypothesis which will also inform other inquiries in this work: The connection between ecology and religion is expectable and logical as far as, and to the degree

---

<sup>90</sup> As it will be discussed in more detail especially in Chapter 5, this lack of agreement ultimately goes further than the opposing arguments of White and Nasr and is highly characteristic of the Islamic environmental discourse.

that the theme of man-nature relationship is surrounded by a notion of *crisis* which is viewed as an *existential* and *moral* crisis.

### 3.3.1.b *Religion as a Meaning System and the Dilemma of the Ecological Crisis*

The first question to be answered is whether there is such a notion of crisis upon which religious actors could react and whether it fits the definition of existential and moral crisis. Arguably, the overview of the history of environmentalism provided in the first part of this chapter (4.1.2) substantiates this claim. The notion of crisis has been shown to be definitional for the surge of environmentalist discourse throughout the 1960s, which established the universal interest in “ecology” and “the environment” in the last instance. At the same time, this newly discovered notion of ecological crisis clearly bears the connotation of both existential and moral crisis. First, what manifests itself in the ecological crisis is the disruption of the basic prerequisites of human life in the form of systems providing necessary “services” for it, and that renders it an existential issue. Second, as far as this disruption is induced by the human activity itself, it may be viewed as a systematic self-destruction of man and society, and this can hardly ever be—even along different lines of moral reasoning—seen otherwise than a moral failure.

It is also here where the analogy between the secular and religious response to this crisis can be well captured. What is first important to note is that in the perception of the ecological crisis within the secular space and language and especially in its everyday, routine expressions, the existential and moral dimensions may often escape our attention. It is also perhaps a part of the “secular” disposition (characteristic of the scientific and “managerial” worldview) to consider the ecological crisis mere “facts” to which a “rational” reaction is demanded and expected (who would, after all, dare render environmentalism a false moral sentiment or even “religion,” except “climate-skeptics” and reactionary libertarian economists).<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, the moral and

---

<sup>91</sup> As it appears in one of the pamphlets of the former Czech president and vociferous critic of environmentalism Václav Klaus (2008). Oddly enough, this book, *Blue Planet in Green Shackles*, became one of not so many Czech books which have been awarded the honor to be translated into Arabic (see Klaus 2010).

existential dimensions still cannot be completely suppressed and resurface throughout the discourse time and again. To document that, it is sufficient to compare two quotations separated by almost sixty years. The first one is from the above-mentioned seminal popularization book about pesticide pollution, written by Rachel Carson:

We stand now where two roads diverge. But unlike the roads in Robert Frost's familiar poem, they are not equally fair. The road we have long been traveling is deceptively easy, a smooth superhighway on which we progress with great speed, but at its end lies disaster. The other fork of the road — the one "less traveled by" — offers our last, our only chance to reach a destination that assures the preservation of our earth. The choice, after all, is ours to make (Carson [1962] 2002, 277)

The second one comes from the statement of the young Swedish activist Greta Thunberg pronounced at the UN Climate Action Summit in 2019:

People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you! (Thunberg 2019).

Apparently, secular discourse also provides specific answers to this moral and existential dimension. This may, on the one hand, comprise of "rationalization" of the whole problem as an issue that is manageable and solvable by specific concrete action (as diverse as the global mitigating action under the guidance of the UN and one's individual action comprising of avoiding the ownership of a car or insulating one's home) inciting a sense of hope and optimism. Alternatively, it may embrace more radical demands like revolutionary dismantling of the dominant politico-economical regimes (most often capitalism, but in the past also communism), or, on the other hand, cynicism and denial of the problem. Still, for such "secular" responses (and that is as far as the concept of "secular" possesses any meaning), religion does not present any necessary component of such reaction.

What if we, though, apply to the whole situation a "religious perspective," and that is, more precisely, a perspective of a given tradition represented by its followers? It seems relatively clear that in such a case, the prospect of ecological crisis (as far as it is known, acknowledged, and taken seriously) may indeed present religiously significant questions.

In the first place, equally as in the secular context, an anthropogenic ecological crisis must, in most cases, appear as a sin and misdeed from the religious point of view: it destroys the conditions of life in general and thus also the individual and collective life of people, that religion, almost as a matter of rule, sanctifies. In addition, also other, more concrete things that a particular faith holds precious may be threatened (e.g., sacred places, monuments, biota). If we limit the question to monotheistic religions (although the same logic may apply also to other faiths and regimes of religiosity), particularly from the perspective of their theology, the world presents a “creation” of God and one which is typically regulated by particular order. The fact that this order is threatened to be upset in a substantial manner (an act which is typically reserved to God in eschatology) by human action cannot be taken easily. And there are also perhaps other reasons which could be (and would be) added. What seems, however, significant is that it is the existential and moral dimension of the ecological crisis by itself—*independent* of the existence of the hypothetical pre-established norms governing the man-environment relationship—which comprises a sufficient ground for concern and response on the part of religious actors.

It is also here where it is possible to trace the basic difference in judgment apparent in the mutually opposed *diagnoses* given by White and Toynebee on the one hand and Nasr and Manzoor (as well as many other Muslim and non-Muslim religious advocates) on the other. Whereas for secular historians, what matters is the mere *validity of a hypothesis* putting the idea of “dominion” at the roots of anthropocentric posture detrimental to the environment, for the adherents of a given religious tradition, the question is more of the *validity of their own world-view*. Since as far as we accept the above-expounded reasoning, it seems rather hard to vindicate or justify the practice leading to the environmental crisis and harm from the point of view of religious morality, lest the validity of this morality would be itself put in question.

Consequentially, against the hypothesis that the specifically religious response to the ecological crisis arises from the presence of ethical categories specifically related to nature within the religious code (i.e., essential or primordial environmental ethics, implicitly or explicitly entertained by the majority of authors within the discourse) a different one may be stated—namely that this

response returns to a much more general disposition of the tradition as a system of morality which is universally applied onto the world.

Theoretically, this disposition may be ultimately identified with one of the long-acknowledged functions of religion discussed within the sociological tradition, namely their capacity to endow human life with meaning. As such, this capacity was identified already by Max Weber,<sup>92</sup> who also provides an important specification of this capacity—namely that the meaning attributed to one’s individual life is inextricably linked to the meaning which is attributed to the *world*. “To the prophet [i.e., who reveals or exemplifies the particular tradition], both the life of man and the world, both social and cosmic events, have a certain systematic and coherent meaning,” writes Weber, noting that it is therefore also typical for the religious view to contain “conception of the world as a cosmos [...] a meaningful, ordered totality” (1965, 59). Significantly, the same assessment given already by Weber is also maintained by the contemporary sociology of religion. According to Silberman, the postulates contained in the meaning system may be divided into descriptive and prescriptive. The first category is “concerned with the nature of the person (a self theory; e.g., ‘I am competent’), the nature of the world (a world theory; e.g., ‘the world is just’), and propositions relating the two (e.g., ‘I can change the world’)” as well as “contingencies and expectations regarding the world, other people, or the self (e.g., ‘good people should be awarded’ or ‘the world will improve in the future’).” The second category, in turn, concerns “how to behave in the future in order to obtain what one desires and avoid what one fears” (2005, 645). Already this second category also indicates that religion, thus conceived as a system of meaning (and here may be seen the difference from other systems of meaning like science), also embraces as its part moral judgments—which can be thought as connecting the meaning of one’s life to that of the “world.” Significantly, these need not be necessarily understood as a sophisticated system of categorization and argumentation (often identified with “ethics” within the philosophical tradition) but may take a much more rudimentary form of discriminating between the most basic categories, typically of “good” and “evil.” In the case of Islam, the primacy of this dichotomy was well

---

<sup>92</sup> Weber identifies the centrality of this aspect particularly in traditions that he identifies as “ethical,” among which he classes all major revealed traditions, including Islam. For these is characteristic “a unified view of the world derived from a consciously integrated and meaningful attitude toward life” (1965, 59).

documented in the work of T. Izutsu (2002),<sup>93</sup> even if it is also apparent in most trivial instances.

Thus, if religion is conceived in this way, the fact that one may witness religious responses to environmentalism—and perhaps more precisely to the ecological crisis uncovered and designated by it—can hardly be seen as surprising. The notion of ecological crisis clearly affects and disturbs the integral view of the world and, as such, incites a *moral* response. This may be, in most cases, expected to categorize the harmful action that causes the environmental disruption as “bad,” and already by that, implicitly ascribe to the normative system of the tradition the morally right posture. Consequently, such a moral posture can be further developed towards different directions and different ends. Drawing on the the empiric study of the discourse, there can, though, be identified at least three nearly universal components of it.

### 3.3.2 The Components of the Moral Response

Arguably, by viewing the Islamic discourse on the environment as a *moral response* to the fact (see 3.1.1) and notion (3.1.2) of ecological crisis, it is also possible to capture the basic structure of the discourse through its essential components. In what follows, I will identify three of such components, which can be seen as basic discursive frames—*crisis and evil*, *norm and guidance*, and *morality and discipline*. In the rest of this work, it will be shown that these basic frames can be, even if in different alterations and with a different measure of representation, evidenced throughout the various and even seemingly disparate

---

93 While the main contribution of Izutsu’s study may be seen in identifying in the Qur’an a wealth of fine-grained semantic relations occurring especially on the level of “descriptive” or “primary” concepts (see Izutsu 2002, 19–22), these are ultimately shown to conform to a more profound dichotomy rendering each descriptive concept a part of “good” – “bad” (or “vice” – “virtue”) register (Izutsu 2002, 105). Leaving aside the process of building concrete semantic structures (related by the author to the variety of aspects of the religious message), what Izutsu’s work overall documents is the overwhelming tendency to apply moral dichotomy on social interactions and particular forms of conduct and thereby governing the functioning of society. This all is ascribed by Izutsu to one primary motive, which is the ethical nature of God himself (who declares a particular ethical posture towards man), from which all the other ethical categorizations gain their meaning (*ibi.d.*, 16–19). In this sense, also Izutsu corroborates the centrality of morality and ethics in the religious worldview, rendering the central Qur’anic concepts “ethico-religious.”

expressions of the discourse. They can be lucidly documented in the two early texts analyzed above, but I will also illustrate them through other examples.

### 3.3.2.a *Crisis and Evil*

Arguably, the notion of *crisis*, as well as that of evil, malady, and disorder, presents the first nearly universal component of the Islamic discourse on the environment. As such, it warrants the specifically *religious* response to the facts and findings about the “state of the world” brought about by the environmentalist paradigm. To repeat, it is certainly not exclusive to religion: many examples of similar perceptions coming from the „secular“ discourse have been, after all, stated above. Still, the notion of crisis and evil arguably plays a special role in religion as it establishes the tension and conflict with the religious worldview and warrants a specific moral response—in contrast to, for example, the imaginary of ecological problems as a „mere“ technical issue, manageable by application of appropriate knowledge and procedure.

This motive has been documented as figuring strongly in Nasr’s work from its outset, expressed in the series of valuations like „disequilibrium,“ „destruction“ of „harmony,“ and endangerment of human life and dignity (Nasr [1968] 1990, 18–20). It has also been documented in Sardar’s and Manzoor’s comments, e.g., as the capacity of the scientific knowledge to „do evil“ (Sardar 1984, 1), the „fearsome mastery“ over nature and, again, the endangerment „man as a race“ (Manzoor 1984, 150–151). Particularly pronounced versions of this notion also appear in the later stages of the discourse, in the writings of authors focused on mobilizing religious action for the sake of the environment by invoking a strong sense of moral sentiment, like, e.g., in that of the British activist, Harfiyah Abdel Haleem (discussed in more detail in 5.1.1.b):

The Qur’an condemns those who heap up wealth, believing it will make them live forever; those who appear to be pious, yet do not help orphans or feed the needy [...] unaware and heedless of the damage they are doing in their quest for wealth. These are the men who cut down huge forests of majestic trees to provide hardwood for office furniture, window-frames, even paper, and pay no attention to restocking the forest; men who fish vast quantities from the sea, heedless of the fact that they are not allowing the ocean's life to replenish itself; men who oppress people and keep them poor, who



force them from their lands, leaving them without any livelihood, and then employ them for low wages on their own land to grow crops for the market to make their employers rich; those who even kill and maim people in order to profit from the land they have stolen. These are the people who cause direct damage to the environment (Abdel Haleem 1998, 8).

Or, in the moralist discourse of Yusuf al-Qaradawi:

All creatures complain about their abuse and the cruelties they were subjected to; the corruption [*fasād*] affected humans, animals, and inanimate elements; soil has been corrupted, air has been corrupted, water has been corrupted, and the corruption has afflicted what is man's food and medicine, the surface of the earth as well as the atmosphere (Qaradawi 2001, 197).

Obviously, the notion of crisis and evil can be conveyed in various terms and in various intensities and does not always take the overtly castigating form like above. Nevertheless, it can be documented in virtually all expressions of the discourse, as an example, taken from the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change, which has been already discussed above, and that is otherwise distinguished by rather a civic language, documents:

Our species, though selected to be a caretaker or steward (*khalīfah*) on the earth, has been the cause of such corruption and devastation on it that we are in danger ending life as we know it on our planet. [...] What will future generations say of us, who leave them a degraded planet as our legacy? How will we face our Lord and Creator? (IFEES 2015, art. 1.3)

Finally, the notion of crisis and evil may seem to be largely suppressed in certain cases, and as such, the *Islamic Principles for the Conservation of the Natural Environment* (Ba Kader et al. 1983; discussed in more detail in 4.2.1.a) may represent a suitable example—as the document does not directly discuss the theme of the ecological crisis and focuses apparently just on setting norms for the environmental legislation. Nevertheless, it is still very much the notion of moral evil connected to ecological harms, which is assumed within the document, that informs its religious undertone:

Religious awareness and guidance in this field is necessary so that each individual may take part in the protection and development of the environment and natural resources. The aphorism transmitted by tradition says, "All people are God's dependants and He loves most those who are the most useful and beneficial to their dependants." God says, "Do no mischief on the earth after it hath been set in order" and

"... but God loveth not mischief" (Ba Kader et al. 1983, 20).

It should be now well apparent that the notion of evil and disorder—one frequently accentuated by the notion of an imminent crisis—is central to the religious Islamic framing of the themes of ecology and the environment. It renders them ultimately relevant, and this is not only for the assumed religious conscience and morality but also for the religious discourse, which can hardly speak to technical subtleties like those of supplanting internal combustion engines with electric ones but may attribute much importance to the fact that particular technologies and economies cause death, harm human health, and result in catastrophe. As such, the religious crisis aligns with other problems of human society and civilization that comprise perennial points of religious interest, like poverty, injustice, crime, or transgressions in interpersonal relations.

### 3.3.2.b *Norm and Guidance*

The notion of *norm* and *guidance* represents another—and well-apparent—component of the Islamic discourse on the environment. Arguably, while the notion of crisis and evil renders the environment and ecology *relevant to Islam*, the notion of norm and guidance, in turn, renders religion *relevant to ecology*. The basic intention and message in this regard is clear: the crisis must be averted and the evil contained.

Nevertheless, as it has been ascertained, this basic and logical moral posture barely remains undifferentiated and general, but, as far as the specifically *religious* (Islamic) response is concerned, it drifts towards seeking more *concrete* guidance in religion. After all, this intention has been already shown to clearly appear in White's statement (1967) standing at the beginning of the whole discourse—it was the failure to account for the value of nature and the environment and revere it in Christianity that became the principal point of critique of the American historian.

Correspondingly, framing the debate on ecology in religious terms on the part of Muslim authors is typically accompanied by the belief that Islam can provide norms and guidance for the individual to deal with problems and dilemmas in this area. This concept of normativity has been in detail expounded

above and conceptualized as the tendency to produce (and also the fact of producing) a „catechism“ (2.2), i.e., the established way of understanding the normative precepts of the tradition relevant to the problems of nature and the environment. As it has been shown in this chapter, this tendency to “catechize” accompanied the articulation of the discourse from the very outset with, notably, the very same motives being intuitively perceived as central, namely *tawhīd* (as the notion of unity of God and the world) *khilāfa* (as the notion of moral responsibility), *āyāt* (implying the religious significance of natural phenomena) and still others (cf. Nasr [1968] 1990, 94–96; Manzoor 1984, 155–157, 161). Related motives will be encountered again and again across the discourses investigated in this work, even though it will be shown that they vary in the modalities of their concrete interpretation and application on actual problems as well as their accentuation. Ultimately, the discourse may, and often does, promote also practical and “technical” norms and injunctions, like in the Islamic climate declaration:

We call upon corporations, finance, and the business sector to [...] Change from the current business model, which is based on an unsustainable escalating economy, and adopt a circular economy that is wholly sustainable [...] Assist in the divestment from the fossil fuel driven economy and the scaling up of renewable energy and other ecological alternatives (IFEES 2015, 3.4).

Still, these norms are underpinned by the „higher“ norms and guidance of religion (as it has also been shown in the case of this specific document; see 2.1.1.a), and this is for a simple reason—they comprise *the* specific and ultimately *the only* resource and contribution that religion can provide in addressing ecological problems and therefore also the obvious channel through which it can relate to them.

### 3.3.2.c *Morality and Discipline*

Finally, there is a notion of *morality* and *discipline* as the actual solution to ecological problems. This means that regardless of the concrete steps to be taken, the solution means accepting restraint in one’s deeds and following particular normative limits—i.e., acting in a disciplined way. This motive, too, has

been clearly demonstrated in both of the analyzed early discussions of the theme of ecology from the Islamic viewpoint. In both Nasr and Manzoor, this *disciplination* takes a peculiar form in what is effectively a limitation of science, the unrestrained application of which had, according to these early opinions, induced the crisis in the first place (Manzoor 1984; Nasr 1990/1968, 114–119). The importance of this disciplinary element is also illustrated, e.g., by Nasr’s lauding of the Islamic civilization’s *achievement* of not pursuing scientific progress beyond the limits of the spiritual significance of nature towards the secularizing effect of modern science.

The tenet of enacting personal morality and discipline may take various different forms. This may comprise of a personal asceticism, as proposed by Gai Eaton (for more, see 5.1.1.b), who puts forth a tenet that „you should not disturb anything in nature, let alone destroy it, without a good cause“ (1998, 52),<sup>94</sup> with the „good cause“ comprising only of „genuine need“ in contrast to „greed.“ This, as such, is eventually discerned only in connection to the „need for our Creator“ („foundation of our need“). The modern man, „turning his back upon his Creator“ and thus „forever unsatisfied, “ thus cannot discern the genuine need and is therefore destined to cause harm by his greed, which, in connection with modern technology, reaches proportions that are catastrophic for the environment (1998, 52). In such a case, the only solution for mankind is spiritual change, in which he becomes aware of his „total dependence“ on Allah and acts as if in his permanent presence (Eaton 1998, 54). As it can be evidenced, morality and discipline thus, in many cases, comprise turning back to religion in the first place—such is the case also in many other contexts, for example, in the moralist discourse of al-Qaradawi who states that even though „legal norms and punishments cannot be avoided“ (alluding thus to another form of disciplination), the eventual remedy lies only in the „belief in God and his message and the house of the hereafter “ as „only this belief can change man from his inside“ (Qaradawi 2001, 257).

Again, this stress on morality can take more practical forms connected to one’s personal lifestyle:

So each one of us has a responsibility to use what little power we have to make things better, not worse. We should try to live economically,

<sup>94</sup> This is derived from the notion that anything in nature praises Allah and should thus not be disturbed equally as one does not want to be disturbed during prayer (see Eaton 1998, 52; cf. 5.1.1.b).

grow some of our own food, use electricity and petrol sparingly, walk and cycle and use public transport where possible and share whatever we have with others who are not so well off (Abdel Haleem 1998, 9).

Or the responsibility stemming from one's particular social or professional position to give once again voice to the Islamic climate declaration:

Finally, we call on all Muslims wherever they may be – Heads of state; Political leaders; Business community; UNFCCC delegates; Religious leaders and scholars [...] to tackle habits, mindsets, and the root causes of climate change, environmental degradation, and

the loss of biodiversity [...] (IFEES 2015, art. 3.6).

This shows that even though the Islamic discourse on the environment addresses problems ensuing from the interaction of the human world with the „outer“ natural world, its response remains decisively entangled on the „human“ side of this problem, in the spheres of values, morality, and ways of conduct—it is this side for which it promises to provide a strategy and procedure for remedy and not the other one. Whether this enclosure can be transcended will be discussed in later parts of this work.

### **3.3.3 Conclusion: The Morality as a Sociological Explanation and Some of the Consequences**

As it has been already presumed and will further be ascertained throughout this work, the debate on the environment, environmental crises, and various approaches to their solution is hardly a matter that can be assessed “neutrally” in separation from its moral dimension.

This does not mean that morality would be the only motive that would matter—quite the opposite: a significant aim of the following three chapters will be to problematize and deconstruct the simplistic perception of the Islamic discourse on the environment through moral terms by bringing in other sociological factors. Yet still, the problem of morality cannot be excluded from the discussion for a simple reason: the inquiry into the discursive practices of Islamic environmentalism shows that morality and moral motives matter. It would be both

cynical and methodologically flawed to assume otherwise. Morality, though, is not a simple problem to discuss or analyze.

This can be, after all, well illustrated by the casual look at the current state of the debate *within* and *about* the discourse. On the one hand, the discussion of morality is clearly strongly present within the discursive field. But it takes a particular form: namely, that of moral or ethical categories (like that of *khilāfa*, trusteeship, or *fasād*, corruption) posited to be inherently and explicitly present in the moral code of the tradition *specifically* as injunctions regulating the human attitude towards nature. Such categories, which together comprise the catechism of the discourse, even though they may be naturally embraced by actors speaking on behalf of Islam as a tradition, are inherently problematic as a means of sociological or discursive analysis. This is because they ultimately derive their validity from the regime pertaining to the discursive field itself and depend on the particular *interpretation* of excerpts of the textual tradition. As such, they evade analysis from the perspective of different referential frameworks (as only the qualified interpretation of the tradition may decide) and can be easily seen as pretensions.<sup>95</sup>

This may be perhaps also the reason why the empirically oriented works on Islam and the environment, even if they casually encounter the above-mentioned moral categories, almost as a matter of rule, avoid the discussion of their substance and only observe their presence as signifiers. What is encountered in such cases are “interpretations” that may look convenient (cf. Hancock 2018, 60) but the validity of which can hardly be debated at all—since it is itself a “matter of interpretation” and the possible discussion of their authenticity reaches “dead end” (Foltz 2003, 249).<sup>96</sup> In this sense, this resembles an “all or nothing” situation: one is either fully absorbed in the moral debate and takes a particular position in it or does not speak to it at all.

---

95 To view categories occurring in a particular discursive field as pretensions may be, in effect, considered as one of the *principles* of discursive analysis, which prevents one from succumbing to these categories and accepting their definition of phenomena which they claim to highlight, understand, and regulate. This may concern e.g., economics, pretending to understand and regulate „natural forces“ of the market, criminology, pretending the same in relation to „crime, “psychiatry to „madness“ and so on (Foucault 2008; 1991)

96 Alternatively, this may be resolved by accepting particular interpretations as contributive from yet a different „external“ (virtually a pragmatic) moral perspective, as it is suggested by Foltz, claiming that we should “acknowledge that among all possible interpretations available to us, it is the eco-friendly, non-hierarchical ones that we desperately need to articulate and put into practice today” (Foltz 2003, 249).

This, however, does not have to be the case. As the analysis above has shown, it is neither necessary nor convenient to avoid the debate on morality as a sociologically significant factor as far as we modify the hypothesis about the source of moral concern within the discourse. Such a hypothesis proposes that the religious response to the ecological crisis arises not primarily from the relevance of religious teachings to nature (i.e., the presence of teachings “about nature”) or the inherence of specific “environmental ethics” in them (which may or may not be present), but rather from their *disposition of moral discourse*. Such a discourse explains the meaning of the world as well as man’s position in it and presents itself as a universal and ultimate guidance (Weber 1969; Silberman 2005), is engaged in the categorization of the world into the opposite notions of “good” and “bad” (Izutsu 2000) and as such cannot remain indifferent towards an issue displaying clear marks of moral calamity, at least as far as it is acknowledged as such. If we accept this hypothesis, it bears a number of important consequences.

1. First of all, the moral concern must be acknowledged as a valid and sociologically significant explanation for the analysis of the discourse. In this sense, the attempts to construe and articulate a particular ethical posture towards the question of the man-nature relationship, such as those which have been hitherto discussed (Nasr 1990; Manzoor 1984; but also all others), can hardly be seen as “inauthentic” but on the contrary: they bear all signs of expressing genuine moral concern and posture. Such a posture may be simultaneously presumed to be a chief driving motivation for many actors to engage in the articulation of the discourse and the ultimate source of its relevance.

2. Second, if we accept the proposition that it is rather logical for (not least) religious adherents to view the ecological crisis as a morally bad thing, it is also possible to explain the tendency to conceive of “ecothology”: as far as the given faith system is conceived of as a universal source of moral guidance, it should contain an answer to the moral question of ecological harm and discourage it. Hence follows the search for related motives and the effort to interpret the tradition and its scriptures in the light of the newly defined problem as it has been evidenced in Nasr’s work where the Qur’anic terms of *khilāfa*, *āyāt*, and *tawḥīd* are applied.

3. Third, such a new interpretation is possible regardless of the previous or traditional position of the given faith towards the questions of “nature,” which may be, in fact, more problematic (as it will be discussed in Chapter 6) and not completely in accord with the now-obvious moral stance (which may moreover shift in time). In fact, the “eco-theologians,” as the authors of new interpretations of the faith, typically scarcely take an interest in the historical evolution of thinking about nature in the given tradition except of mentioning convenient examples. Under a closer look, Nasr (see 1990; 1996) is no exception in this regard—while he pays close attention to the historical process of desacralization of nature by modern philosophy and science and covers it in a detailed, sometimes minute way, as far as Islam and other traditions are concerned, virtually no historical inquiry or research is applied—what matters are general principles derived from the primeval scriptural sources, or in other words, author’s own interpretation of the valid posture of the given tradition. This all may be again related to the thesis that the presence of moral concern and the ability to articulate a corresponding posture is *not* primarily or essentially *dependent* on the established content of the tradition (i.e., its “code”). In other words, it is rather unimportant whether the given tradition, for example, conveys in its textual canon an “anthropocentric” bias (as it was claimed about Christianity by White and about all the monotheistic traditions by Toynbee), as the general categorization of the ecological crisis as morally bad comprises sufficient grounds for reinterpreting the key moral categories in an appropriate way. This can be, after all, made well apparent by the way in which both Nasr and Manzoor present the hierarchic notion of man and nature as an asset rather than a liability, rendering it an argument for the responsible and considerate treatment of nature through the concept of trusteeship (*khilāfa*; cf. Nasr 1990, 96; Manzoor 1984, 156–157). It can also be illustrated by the fact that both authors produce a resolute and, in some cases, more eloquently expressed moral stance towards the environmental crisis than authors in the more recent layers of the discourse while drawing on a relatively limited register of specific categories in comparison to the later-evolving detailed catechism. Finally, this also means that the moral posture attributed to the given tradition need not lose its validity in the case that the validity of particular categories is put in doubt (as in the case of *khilāfa*, where the



interpretation of the concept as “trusteeship” has been criticized as historically biased and unwarranted; see Tlili 2012, 115–119) or even if the whole body of “ecotheology” is questioned—the relevance of the moral position ultimately does not depend on whether one believes that the Qur’an contains a “ready-made” recipe to the solution of the modern environmental dilemmas.

4. Fourth, as far as we view the Islamic discourse on the environment as primarily a *moral response* to the fact of the ecological crisis, we should also view it in its specific concomitant limitations and dependence on other discourses. Most importantly, while the concrete shape of the moral assessment and categorization of the crisis is something that primarily pertains to the inside of the discursive field (i.e., it is decided on the grounds of religious debate and drawing on the basic ethical valuations of the given tradition), the religious world view is hardly the source of the definition and understanding of the ecological crisis itself. This, as it has been shown (3.1), is produced elsewhere. The religious response, thus, in this specific way, *depends* on understandings and definitions produced by other discourses, the most significant of which is arguably *science*. Thus, while the Islamic discourse on the environment may well categorize a particular action causing anthropogenic climate change as morally bad, this is only on the basis of the previous identification of the causal mechanism occurring between this activity (which may be otherwise seen as harmless) and its consequence. In this sense, the religious discourse is normatively dependent on external (scientific or other) assessments—essentially as other strands of the environmentalist discourse (e.g., the political debate on environmental matters). As a matter of course, this assessment may change in time and may lead to the appropriate modifications in the moral assessments themselves. The ignorance of this external normativity, in turn, may lead to factually wrong (and thus also morally questionable) conclusions. This aspect, among other things, explains why the religious discourse on the environment historically emerged at a distinct time, namely in the aftermath of the identification and popularization of the notion of ecological crisis and environmental problems in the 1960s (and is first produced by authors most intimately acquainted with this notion). The consequences of this relationship may also be evidenced in the prevailing shape of the discourse: this typically tends to keep distance from the “technical” details surrounding the man-environment

relationship. The above-discussed texts of Nasr and Manzoor, after all, illustrate this tendency well as both of them, in fact, contain very little discussion of the environment in its physical sense or environmental problems in their concrete contours. In contrast, both authors treat the ecological crisis as largely a self-evident fact that requires no further elucidation (see Nasr 1990, 17–20; Manzoor 1984, 150) and orient their argumentation predominantly precisely toward *moral* matters and the concomitant areas of culture, philosophy, ethics, metaphysics and so on. The same feature can also be evidenced in the content of what has been identified as the catechism of the discourse, which is overwhelmingly based on general categories (doing no harm, acting responsibly, paying due regard to the significance of nature, avoiding squandering) and lacks normative that would be immediately applicable (e.g., prohibiting the use of nuclear energy). In occasional cases, when the authors consider it fitting to include in their writings the “technical” information, they usually do so by more or less openly adopting the scientific information on the matter (see e.g., Qaradawi 2001, 162–195). Eventually, this dependence on external normativity must be seen as a limitation in the ability of the discourse to present a contribution to the solution of environmental dilemmas, as it will be yet further discussed.

5. Fifth, while the view of the Islamic discourse on the environment as a moral response to the ecological crisis presumes certain basic features of such response (like categorizing the anthropogenic ecological crisis as morally deplorable), this response as such may take various forms, depending on many different factors. In fact, this variance has already been evidenced in the comparison of the two above-examined texts wherein both authors promote different answers to the dilemma of the ecological crisis, apparently returning to their other intellectual and religious commitments (Traditionalism in Nasr’s case and the discourse of the Islamization of science in Manzoor’s case). Such—and even greater—variance will be further evidenced in the following chapters and will become a specific theme of analysis in Chapter 5 where, as in the previous case, the influence of external normativity (theorized as identity) will be attested. Overall, it is again the embeddedness of the discourse in the general moral principles (and not the specific ones) that explains the versatility of the religious position, which, while referring to the same general set of principles (doing no

harm, revering nature, acting responsibly), may advocate for different and sometimes even contradicting concrete solutions to ecological problems. In this regard, it is also important to stress that the primacy of moral motivation ultimately does not preclude the ensuing moral reasoning from leading to wrong directions, being hypocritical, and so on. This also stands at the roots of the polemics within the discourse, which emerged recently and will be debated in Chapter 6.

6. Sixth, while the hypothesis about the moral response to the ecological crisis as the defining aspect of the religious-environmentalist discourse contains an implicit *prediction* of such a response and its basic orientation, such a prediction is only a probabilistic one. Significantly, the cursory evidence derived from the prevailing positioning of religious authorities and the general tendency of the normative discourse on their part seems to correspond with this prediction. As will be yet repeatedly observed throughout this work, the last half-century saw a plethora of statements communicating the unequivocally “pro-environmental” stance of a plurality of religious traditions with relatively few examples in the opposite direction. This, however, does not mean that there would not be such examples. A particularly notable exception seems to be the case of a part of the Evangelical Christian movement in the US, which has, especially in the recent period, displayed a tendency to downplay environmental concerns and oppose mitigating action, notoriously (but not least) in relation to climate change. Still, this important case also provides us with some additional criteria for the whole hypothesis, which may also provide an explanation for possible exceptions. First, it is important to note that “eco-skepticism” seems to have been the default position of the Evangelicals—on the contrary, the 1970s and 1980 saw pro-environmental attitudes being disseminated within the community upon the publication of one of the first eco-theological statements within Christianity by an Evangelical pastor Francis Schaeffer in 1970 (see Schaeffer 1970; Pogue 2023; 2022). The turn towards the skeptical position thus occurred more recently and significantly, it seems to be accompanied by two specificities. The first one is the radical “otherworldly” position preaching the imminent second coming of Jesus and the end of times, and the second is the rejection of the factual accuracy of the evidence pointing towards the existence of the ecological crisis (Veldman see esp.

25–46; 69–85; 161–189). Generalizing this observation, these two are also the two most readily conceivable exceptions from the above-stated rule: either the very *fact* of the occurrence of the ecological crisis is disputed, or the given belief system gravitates towards an apocalyptic and millenarian vision which renders the ecological decay unimportant, or, in an extreme case, even desirable as a necessary precondition of a cosmic transformation. Significantly, within the Islamic discourse studied in this work, no occurrence of such an orientation has been registered—but this does not rule out the possibility of its occurrence in the future.

7. Finally, seventh, the structure of the moral response of the discourse says nothing about its real impact through changing human minds, human actions, and, ultimately, the environmental condition. While the above-stated hypothesis conveys an attempt to explain the origins of the Islamic environmental discourse, it does not, by itself, comprise a sufficiently comprehensive explanation. Arguably, it is most valuable for capturing the basic structure of the discourse (see 4.3.2) as well as the important motivation on the level of individual actors that should not be omitted from the analysis. However, (and this is connected to its probabilistic nature), this cannot be seen as a “causal mechanism” that would necessitate the moral response to the ecological crisis in every single individual follower of the tradition. Obviously, the social reality does not work in this way. Fundamentally, the moral response is only a *possibility* that *may* or *may not* occur. The hitherto made observations have shown that the emergence of environmental discourse within the Islamic tradition was slow and scattered. It was a matter of just a few engaged individuals coming from a particular milieu and possessing a specific kind of symbolic capital (they were well-informed about the environment and environmentalist discourse). It took a relatively long for the sustained debate on “Islam and the environment” to take shape, together with its basic normative patterns. Arguably, this must be explained by the dependence on other factors, largely external to the moral dimension of the discourse—most importantly, the spread of the ecological paradigm in general terms and other particular conditions conducive to eliciting such a reaction—comprising in great part of the powerful drivers of social change in the form larger social bodies and *assemblages*. I will focus on these now.

## 4 Promoting Social Change: The Role of Institutions

In the previous chapter, I have focused on what may be viewed as the emergence of the Islamic discourse on the environment and analyzed it in a specific context of the spread of the consciousness of environmental problems, framed explicitly in the new environmentalist movement of the 1960s as an ecological crisis. Through the close reading of two texts by individual authors, I have also proposed that the emergence of the discourse primarily returns to the framing of the ecological crisis as an existential and moral problem that necessitates a response from the perspective of religious conscience. As will be shown in this chapter, the moral concern on the part of individuals cannot be seen as a sufficient explanation and “mechanism” through which the discourse spread and developed into its current shape. An important role in this process must be attributed to the agency of *institutions*.

In fact, it would be wrong to underestimate the role of institutions in the case of individual authors either. Both Nasr and Manzoor, whose texts have been examined, were as individuals in part determined by their institutional entanglement, and it was, among other things, their academic training and presence in specific intellectual circles to which their ability to devise their particular responses to the theme of ecology must be attributed (this has been explicitly discussed in the case of Nasr who was well ahead the other authors taking up the theme). Given these specific environments, they were, as intellectuals (as we may refer to them), well-informed and possessed the necessary understanding and capacity to react. Yet, at the same time, these reactions in the form of academic texts failed to stir a tangible movement. This fact can be ultimately attributed to their specificity, too—both their form as intellectual statements condensed in academic publications and their overall

disposition of meditative essays could by itself hardly (unless in otherwise opportune circumstances) inspire public activism.

It was also in this situation that the interest in the Islamic (and more broadly religious) discourse on the environment came from a different direction, prompted by a different kind of actors. The first tangible outcome of this interest came in 1983 when a document under the name *Islamic Principles for Conservation of Nature* (Ba Kader et al. 1983) was issued, based on the cooperation of two, perhaps unexpected, actors. The first one was a major international ENGO with a seat in Switzerland, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the second one was the government of a major Muslim country, which may be seen as holding a special symbolic significance for the assemblage of Islam by being the locus of the two most holy sites for the majority of Muslims—Saudi Arabia. A similar significance must be then ascribed to a document that appeared three years later in 1986—the *Islamic Declaration on Nature* (Naseef 1986). In this case, the initiative came from another (if closely related) international ENGO, the World Wildlife Fund, and also embraced other religious traditions, the representatives of which met at Assisi<sup>97</sup> to issue a collective statement on environmental matters. The Muslim voice was represented by Abdullah Omar Naseef, the Secretary General of the Muslim World League (MWL).

Both of these texts that are, not incidentally, still frequently quoted as watersheds must be seen as historically important. First of all, they represent a new locus of the emergence of the discourse, which occurred without an apparent link to the above-discussed texts by “intellectuals” and proved to be significant for its further proliferation. Simultaneously, they also represent a different kind of motivation for establishing the connection between Islam and the environment—one which is not centered on settling the question intellectually and “arriving at the truth” in a more narrow sense but rather on inciting tangible social change through applying the principles of conservation in practice.

Throughout this chapter, I will focus on this important source of motivation, expressed through the activity of institutions, and I will attempt to

---

<sup>97</sup> The birthplace of St. Francis, identified already by White (1967, 1206) and Nasr (1990, 60, 103) as the possible source of environmentally positive values in Christianity and named the Patron Saint of Ecology by John Paul II in 1979.

trace the history of institutional engagement in the promotion and dissemination of the Islamic discourse on the environment. This will cover, among other themes, the history of further activities by WWF, which, after the release of the *Assisi Declarations* in 1986, continued to provide its support to religiously based environmental discourse and, in 1995, initiated the establishment of a special body of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ACR) to this end. Among others is the engagement of ISESCO (the Islamic Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization; a branch of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation) that came a little bit later and lasted for a limited amount of time around the turn of the millennium, and still some other actors, like the ministries of the environment of certain Muslim countries and UNEP

Even if, ultimately, perhaps not producing the results that were expected from it, this institutional engagement will be shown as crucial for the further development and dissemination of the discourse, to the point that without its consideration, its existence and shape cannot be adequately captured. Eventually, the importance of the institutions—the large social bodies and *assemblages* operating on national and international levels—returns to one central factor. Although the institutions were not the first to come, they brought in resources that the individual intellectuals did not dispose of. These comprised, except for the necessary funding, the organizational capacity to connect and network a greater number of individuals in common purpose and the disposition of the means of communication and dissemination. In this way, the activity of the institutions enabled the discourse to move on a different level and endow it with a more widespread popularity and currency. It also helped to facilitate the emergence of social networks of activists, which carried the discourse further on (see more in Chapter 5). And not least, it influenced the shape of the discourse itself, as it diffused new forms of expression focused more on conveying the clear and readily applicable moral-religious tenets relevant to various domains of environmental problems and conservationist action. As such, they clearly contributed to the emergence of the Islamic environmental discourse and its catechism.

I will divide this chapter into three parts. In the first, I will again focus on the continuing history of environmentalism through its institutionalization, and I

will also discuss the motivations behind the involvement of (especially secular) environmentalist institutions in promoting Islamic discourse (4.1). In the second, I will examine the history of this involvement by both secular and Islamic institutions (4.2). Finally, in the third part, I will evaluate the impacts of institutional engagement and some of its consequences (4.3).



## **4.1 Environmentalism, Institutions, and Islam: The Lineage of the Connection**

As in the previous chapter, the discussion of a particular aspect of the history of the Islamic discourse on the environment is not fully possible without addressing a specific significant context. In this case, it comprises the emergence of the institutional realm of environmentalism and its “infrastructure,” consisting of institutions and organizations that followed the intellectual and social movement of the 1960s. I will now first briefly recount the process of institutionalization and international cooperation that has increasingly marked the environmental agenda from the 1970s on and progressively also transformed its meaning. In the second section, I will then focus on the institutions that would become relevant specifically for the articulation of the Islamic environmental discourse and pose a question about their motivations.

### **4.1.1 The Institutionalization of the Environmental Agenda from the 1960s**

When we left the history of environmentalism in the previous chapter, we saw that during approximately one decade between 1962 and 1972, the basic themes of what still forms the backbone of the discussion on the environment were already articulated. Except for the new paradigm rendering the society as inextricably embedded in the web of environmental relations, these comprised the reflection of various factors of the global environmental change, such as the application of technology, the rise of population, and economic growth. The discussion was also focused on the overall seriousness of environmental problems and the adequacy of various means of their solution, not least in the light of the latent contradiction between the imperative of development and the danger of breaking the ecological limits (Macnaghten and Urry 1998, 47). Obviously, many of these debates continue up to now, both in the academic and popular discourses. What has been, however, the impact of these debates?

The answer to this question is not too difficult to see: undeniably, the world changed under the influence of the environmental discourse and, together with it, many of our everyday practices. Against some popular imaginations, very few of these changes, however, occurred spontaneously. Instead, they must be ascribed to a highly organized activity typical for modern societies and the emergence of new (or the transformation of old) institutions that became systematically focused on one central aim: regulating the human activities affecting the natural environment and mitigating its adverse effects. These institutions employed various means: legislation, monitoring, and enforcement by national governmental agencies as well as international coordination, advocacy, and education. Not least, it was also by the activity of these institutions that the new environmentalist discourse—shown to have surfaced first in the global industrial center of the US (and to a lesser degree in other industrialized countries)—spread to other parts of the world.

Institutional capacity building at the global level must be seen as the most important one. In June 1972, the United Nations Conference on Human Environment (UNCHE) was held in Stockholm, hosting the representatives of governments of most countries as well as NGOs. This led to the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the adoption of the UNCHE Declaration, embracing 26 principles for the sake of „environmental aims“ as well as the Action Plan for their fulfillment (UN 1972, 3–5). UNCHE has initiated the continuing efforts of the UN to coordinate the institutional framework for the solution of environmental problems. This included the convening of further conferences like the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro between June 3 and 14, 1992 (also known as Earth Summit), the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 (UN 2002) and the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, again in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. Added to that may be a number of other initiatives, including the separate platforms for the discussion and resolution of the question of global climate change that has, from the end of the 1980s, gained a position as central environmental agenda and one of the key global issues in general.<sup>98</sup>

---

98 Scientific evidence about this phenomenon began to proliferate in the 1970s, and from the 1980s, it started to attract wider attention, including on the part of politicians (important was, among others, the speech by Margaret Thatcher before the Royal Society in 1988 [see

Significantly, this institutionalization also resulted in a new framing of environmental problems. From the 1960s and early 1970s, when the debate was dominated by the atmosphere of doom and blistering critique of the imminent crisis of modern civilization led astray by its pride and blindness (strongly reflected upon also in the texts discussed in the previous chapter; cf. 3.2), the newborn institutions, particularly the UNEP embraced more pragmatic approach. Between the conferences in Stockholm in 1972 and Rio in 1992, a new concept of *sustainable development* was articulated by the commission of Gro Harlem Brundtland (see UN 1987; 1992). This provided the environmental movement with a new imaginary of concrete, practical, and realizable goals that ultimately promised to rectify the crisis. It also offered to resolve the conflict that emerged within the environmental movement as the first and gravest concern (well mirrored especially in Nasr's discourse)—the conflict between development and environmental sustainability, which seemed at first unresolvable.

The 1970s and 1980s saw the establishment of still other institutions that promised to tackle environmental problems. These comprised the international coordination under the heading of the UN itself, environmental legislation on a national level compounded by the establishment of the executive agencies of environmental protection on the part of governments (including in Muslim countries already from the 1970s on), and ratification of international conventions (which raised much optimism when the Montreal Protocol of 1987 largely succeeded in making steps towards the resolution of the ozone layer depletion), and not least, the popular mobilization which progressively morphed into electoral support for green (or “greener”) political parties, membership in local clubs and initiative, and donations to environmental NGOs which gained prestige and power and expanded their radius of action throughout the period (cf. McCormick 1989, 187–189; Macnaghten and Urry 1998, 27–29).

Even if such a view is, to a certain degree, schematic, it can be said that environmentalism was first born in the US and reverberated through the Western

---

Thatcher 1988; see also Macnaghten and Urry 1998, 46]). In 1988, the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change was founded to collect scientific findings on the matter and coordinate their evaluation. The question was put on the agenda at the UNCED in Rio, where the commitments of individual states were also for the first time adopted. These were in 1997 supplemented by the so-called Kyoto Protocol and are then subject to periodical review at other conferences.

world but was made global and universal by the UN. As it has been shown, one of the main traits of the new environmentalism of the 1960s was that it articulated its concerns as universal and existential. It is, though, questionable whether this universality would be accepted so widely as it has been were it not for a global body, at the time widely respected, to adopt it as one of its main causes (along with international peace and humanitarian agenda—other universalist aims). Especially the conferences in 1992 and 2002 marked significant events that attracted widespread attention, created a semblance of momentum, and indeed succeeded in setting some standards for both the debate about the environmental problems and actual policies in this area. Up till now, no state has gone so far as to openly rebel against the environmental agenda as set by the UN. This is even though a brief look at the actual environmental indicators and the actual steps taken by governments must lead anyone to a sober conclusion: the speeches delivered and pledges made at international venues are scarcely delivered. While the UN adopted many key motives of the 1960s movement and progressively developed some of them further, it simultaneously became a place of quarrel and hardly-searched compromise between the utopian pursuit of a safe world free of existential threats and political realism reckoning with the existing interests and limits of the possible.

The Islamic discourse on the environment was affected by this transformation in many ways. The most important of them have been the attempts to mobilize it for the pursuit of the new agenda of sustainability and ecological law-making. I will now briefly introduce the main institutions, which have become implicated in this effort together with the traces of genealogy of their connection with the Islamic discourse.

#### **4.1.2 The Institutions Involved in the Promotion of the Islamic Discourse on the Environment and the Logic of Their Involvement**

Especially if we look at the period in which the institutional engagement in the promotion of the Islamic environmentalist discourse started (but to a large degree also its later phases), we may observe that the major role was played by institutions that do not have any distinct relationship to Islam as a religious

tradition, but rather on the contrary—they can be viewed as thoroughly secular. Even before addressing this seemingly paradoxical fact, it is worth introducing two main of them in more detail.

#### 4.1.2.a *The Secular Institutions: IUCN and WWF*

The first of these institutions is the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Established in 1948 upon the initiative of Julian Huxley, the first Director General of UNESCO, the organization represented the early post-WWII attempts to formalize and coordinate the environmental conservation and protection efforts on the international and global level and comprises the oldest still operating international organization in this area. Functioning in the first place as an expert and advisory body, it initially struggled to gain proper funding and influence. This, however, changed in the 1960s when the World Wildlife Fund (see below), serving initially as a fundraising vehicle for the IUCN, was established and when the rising global concern for the environment catapulted the Union to the forefront of the international agenda. In 1968, the IUCN was given consultative status by the UN and participated in the preparation of the UNCHE in Stockholm in 1972, including in the drafting of new conventions adopted by the conference. The Union subsequently established a lasting cooperation with the UNEP. It grew into one of the most acclaimed international ENGOs with a vast organizational structure, a number of regional offices and member groups, and a significant role in channeling bilateral aid from industrialized to developing countries through numerous local projects. It has also played an essential role in setting the standards for environmental conservation, e.g., through its *Red List of Threatened Species* (probably the most well-known IUCN publication first issued in 1964), categorization of protected areas and other evaluative and data-gathering activities (McCormick 1989, 31–36, 38–41; see also Holdgate 1999).

Closely aligned with the IUCN is a second influential international ENGO, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). As already mentioned, the primary purpose of establishing WWF in 1961 was to fund the activities of IUCN. Both organizations were thus initially closely interconnected and also shared their headquarters, first in Morges and since 1980 in Gland, Switzerland. Over the

following decades, the WWF though outgrew the IUCN, progressively starting to run its own independent projects. These partly overlapped with the agenda of the latter organization, being similarly focused on providing expertise, distributing financial aid in the area of environmental conservation, supporting protected areas, and lobbying governments and other political bodies at various levels. Nonetheless, WWF also progressively drifted from a purely expert body towards the area of popularization, mobilization, and rising of ecological awareness (see McCormick 1989, 41–46). With its iconic giant panda emblem, it now comprises the largest, richest, and one of the most well-known global ENGOs, running, among other activities, campaigns like Debt-for-nature Swap or Earth Hour.

#### 4.1.2.b *The Logic of the Involvement of Secular Institutions*

What was the motivation of secular institutions to participate in the articulation and promotion of the Islamic discourse on the environment? This is certainly an interesting question and one that can be answered through the shift that the environmental movement underwent over the decades following the generative moment of the 1960s. This has been described above as the move towards institutionalization, the aim of which has been, among other things, to resolve the contradiction permeating the twin global agenda of development and environmental conservation. Significantly, concomitant to that was also the change in the strategy of environmental conservation itself.

Throughout the preceding part of the 20th century, the efforts for conservation (which significantly predate the rise of the popular environmental conscience; see 3.1.2) were concentrated around an expert-centered and “paternalistic” model of protection based on planning and usually also on banning or limiting the presence of humans in the protected areas (the so-called “Yellowstone model”). Throughout the 1970s, the community of conservationists, however, eventually saw shortcomings of this model, which got into conflict with the very communities that were closest to the ecosystems to be preserved. A new paradigm emerged, acknowledging the merit of cooperation with indigenous communities and reflecting their needs and opinions together with governments of

developing countries. This shift changed the approach of the IUCN as well as other ENGOs (see Holdgate 1999, 132–165; McCormick 1989, 46).<sup>99</sup>

The involvement of religion must be regarded as a specific outcome of this newly defined approach. In sum, beginning with the IUCN, the environmentalist institutions from the early 1980s adhered to the idea that religions, or more precisely, their practitioners and faith communities, could become actively engaged in environmental advocacy and the pursuit of environmental goals. The logic of this initiative can be eventually reduced to one chief consideration. This was succinctly expressed in the later Ohito Declaration (see further below) of 1995: “[...] collectively, people of faith represent the most powerful voice in the world” (ARC 1995). In other words, for the promoters of the religion-environment liaison—in a marked shift from the secularist skepticism of the preceding period—religion presented a potentially abundant and hitherto untapped source of social power which could be actualized were significant numbers of believers adhering to a particular faith convinced that about the incumbency of the obligation to conserve and protect the environment within that very faith.

While it is unclear whether the adherents of this strategy sincerely believed in the existence of such obligation, they, at the very least, believed in the potential of religious traditions to respond to the global problems of the environment. As many of the concrete examples of the resulting discourse will evidence, this was based on their basic perception of *moral* systems. Notably, what has been identified above as the main motivation for articulating Islamic ecotheologies thus appears here again, now in the form of an *assumed* moral motivation, rendering religion a suitable *instrument* of the global conservationist agenda.

The actual *modus operandi* of this arrangement eventually became relatively constant and gained the form of facilitation and coordination, expected to give the religious obligation to protect the environment a concrete shape and disseminate it among believers. More specifically, it meant to support religious

---

<sup>99</sup> Notably, IUCN was at the time of the publication of the principles also presided over by Muhammad Qassas, an Egyptian botanist often called a “patriarch” and “pioneer” of Egyptian environmentalism (see, e.g., Sarant 2012). Whether Qassas played any role in the initiative to prepare the *Islamic Principles* (see below) is not clear—notably, the Egyptian biologist and environmentalist has no track record of engaging in “Islamic environmentalism” himself.

leaders and representatives of the faiths to speak to the issue, to extract from them authoritative statements on it, and, finally, to incite a movement and (ideally mass) participation in promoting the conservationist goals on the part of the religious communities. As will be seen shortly, institutionally sponsored texts on Islam and the environment followed this path, too. Although the first activity in this direction came from the IUCN (which supported the seminal statement by Ba Kader et al. 1983), the key actors of this approach subsequently became WWF and its effective subsidiary, the ARC. In the more recent period, similar initiatives have also been run or supported by UNEP.

While it is questionable (and I will return to this question in the third part of this chapter; see 4.3) to what degree this effort has brought tangible results, it played an undeniable role in facilitating the emergence of the Islamic discourse on the environment and its development as the following historical analysis will show. To this, we may compare the role and motivation of the Islamic institutions that were invited to cooperate and, in some cases, initiated activities in this direction themselves.

#### 4.1.2.c *The Islamic Institutions and Their Role*

In this section, I will focus only on a selection of Islamic institutions and organizations that played a role in the promotion of the Islamic discourse on the environment and specifically on those that took part in the initiatives that will become the subject of analysis in this chapter. Admittedly, the environmentalist discourse was, especially with the passing of time, occasionally adopted also by other institutions and organizations. Some of the related examples will be mentioned in the following chapter.

The first institution that has to be mentioned is the Meteorological and Environmental Protection Administration (MEPA) of Saudi Arabia. This body was established in 1981 as a specialized governmental agency through the transformation of the previously extant office of meteorology and has existed under a slightly different name up to this day (see MEWA n.d.). As already



mentioned, its establishment must be viewed in the broader context of introducing environmental protection as a specific executive agenda in the Muslim (and, more generally, other world) countries in that period. In addition, its establishment occurred in interesting historical circumstances, which will still be mentioned.

The second Muslim organization that will be dealt with is the Muslim World League (*Rabitat al-‘Alam al-Islami*; MWL). The MWL was established in 1962 in Mecca under the auspices of the Saudi government. Equipped with extensive organizational structure and being funded generously from the growing oil revenue of the Kingdom, the MWL grew into a sizeable and well-known organization over the following decades, engaged in an array of activities from charity, education, and proselytizing to organizing global congresses and political “lobbying” in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries, financing, among other things, a network of mosques (many of them newly constructed) and clerics to officiate in them (Landau 2015, 284–285). Called by Landau “an unofficial agency of the Saudis” (284), the MWL later gained notoriety as an effective spreader of the Saudi-promoted Salafist interpretation of Islam characteristic of xenophobic aspects and intolerant to other expressions of faith—and in certain instances conducive to the spread of the militant Islamism (cf. Kepel 2002, 52; see also Landau 2015, 283–287). This aspect is, though, not very important for the (rather tangential) role of the MWL in shaping the Islamic discourse on the environment, even if it gives an interesting insight into the organization’s portfolio.

Finally, the third Islamic organization whose role in the promotion of the Islamic discourse on the environment is to be highlighted is the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO). The ISESCO was established within the framework of the Organization of Islamic Conference (later Cooperation; OIC), established in 1969 in Rabat as a platform for coordination among Muslim states in areas ranging from foreign policy to economic and developmental policies and banking, modeled on the basis of the structure of UN (Landau 2015, 287–294). The Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO, paraphrasing the UNESCO acronym) was established in 1980 with its seat in Rabat to fulfill one of the OIC’s main aims in the form of the promotion of educational and cultural activities (Landau 2015, 294–295). While

the description of other organizations could still be added (e.g., the Ministry of the Environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran), this list is sufficient for now.

The obvious question now is, what motivated the Islamic institutions to adopt the environmental agenda? In what follows, it will be shown that this question is more complicated than in the case of secular institutions, as these motivations seem to have been more miscellaneous. In the first place, it is important to stress that the very characterization of these institutions as “Islamic” may be, to a certain degree, problematic as they, as a matter of rule, do not have a root or precedent in the historical *assemblage* of Islam and neither of them represents (in contrast to, for example, the institution of the Catholic Church and papacy) an authoritative or incumbent organization from the religious perspective. As already indicated by the description above, they were established only in the modern era, often modeled on the structure of other modern international institutions, and have been following various agendas and aims. Moreover, what may be stressed already at this place, while these associations and especially the individual actors working in them may have in concrete cases shared the conviction about the significance and the instrumental role of religion in fighting the ecological problems, their perseverance and measure of activity in promoting the matter seem to be lesser than in the case of the “secular” organizations—with which their activity has been nevertheless in some way or another related and coordinated.

In this sense, the question may also be very well restated in the following way: why have the transnational Islamic organizations not become more significant promoters of the Islamic environmentalist discourse on their own, and why is this discourse not represented more pronouncedly by other actors (e.g., the governments of states that identify as Islamic) even to the degree that their role seems to be overshadowed by individual activists, and the host of much smaller, specialized, and newly established Islamic ENGOs? The answer to this question may eventually prove to be more complicated than it seems at face value, and I will attempt to propose it later, on the basis of the investigation of individual cases in this chapter and the discussion of the problem of identity, that seems to be closely related to it and will become a subject of inquiry in Chapter 5.

## **4.2 The Institutional Histories of the Islamic Discourse on the Environment**

As it has been delineated in the introductory chapter (1.1), the presented work is grounded in the belief in the benefit of a historical inquiry. Although the role of the texts that have emerged as the product of institutional engagement in the spread and development of the Islamic discourse on the environment is not unknown, and these texts are frequently quoted in the discourse, there has been little effort to uncover their actual trajectory of emergence. In what follows, I will highlight in more detail how these documents emerged, together with their detailed analysis. I will first focus on the early stage of this engagement (4.2.1) and then on its continuation up till the present (4.2.2). This will serve as a basis for the discussion of the contribution of the institutions as well as its limits in the final part of this chapter (4.3).

### **4.2.1 The Early Stage: The Islamic Principles and the Assisi Declaration**

The previous chapter, among other things, tackled the questions of the origins of the discourse in the writings of engaged intellectuals. The intellectuals, however, were not the only ones partaking in the early evolution of the discourse. Actually, the institutions were among early-comers, too, as the following statement, issued shortly before Sardar's collection (1984) discussed in the previous chapter, will now illustrate.

#### *4.2.1.a The Islamic Principles for the Conservation of the Natural Environment*

The first identifiable document that emerged from institutional backgrounds and attempted to articulate a specifically "Islamic" view on environmental questions was issued in 1983 under the title of the *Islamic*

*Principles for the Conservation of the Natural Environment*. The brochure must be seen as historically important for the development of the Islamic discourse on the environment as it comprises the first pronouncement attempting to set a standard of the “Islamic view” on environmental problems in a quasi-official form. In this sense, it is also often recalled and quoted in the later discourse (see, e.g., Kaminski 2018, 178; Wescoat 2008, 868; Idllalène 2021, 4). Nonetheless, these quotations usually do not involve a substantial analysis of the document in terms of its content and even less so of its historical origins—in this sense, it plays more the role of an *artifact* than an actual source. Both the content of the document and the process of its genesis are, though, instructive for the assessment of the discourse and its origins. Let us then first look more closely at how the document and the initiative that led to its release came into being.

On the most general level, the document emerged from the cooperation between two actors—the IUCN and the government of Saudi Arabia or, more specifically, its specialized branch responsible for the environmental agenda in the Kingdom—the MEPA. Eventually, the *Islamic Principles*, issued by the IUCN in Gland in the form of a trilingual (English, French, and Arabic) brochure of about 50 pages, were an outcome of a collective endeavor. Among their authors are four members of the Department of Islamic Studies, Faculty of Arts and Humanities of King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, including the chairman of the Department, Abu Bakr Ahmed Ba Kader (or Baqadir), and three other professors of whom especially the name of Mawil Izzi Dien is worth noting.<sup>100</sup> At the same time, the key role in the preparation of the document was also played by other actors, namely Abdulbar al-Gain (a vice-president of MEPA and of the IUCN at the time and a leading representative of Saudi Arabia at international forums and bodies related to environmental protection) and Omar Bkhashab, an academician specialized in law (notably, all four named authors and consultants were Western-educated specialists in the fields of law, sociology and resource management).<sup>101</sup>

---

100 Izzi Dien later became one of the significant authors of writings on Islam and the environment. In contrast to other authors of the paper for whom the study was a one-time opportunity to comment on environmental issues from the Islamic perspective, Izzi Dien developed a life-long interest in the topic and became one of the most proficient and often-quoted authors in the field. See more in chapters 5 and 6.

101 Added to that may be Othman Llewelyn, who participated in the preparation of the second revised version of the document issued by IUCN in 1994 (see Bagader et al. 1994).

The IUCN also provided a consultancy through the person of conservation specialist Wolfgang Burhenne.

While the precise process of the compilation of the document is not clear, it is apparent that it originated from a shared initiative of the MEPA and the IUCN that resulted in the demand, addressed to the academicians of the King Abdulaziz University, to compile the text (cf. Gain 1983). While the motivation of the IUCN to support environmental law-making in developing countries based on their indigenous traditions has already been explained above (see Holdgate 1999, 186; see also 4.1.2.b), what explains the participation of the Saudi authorities? While closer research would be needed to fully elucidate the emergence of the document, a partial explanation is possible by considering specific historical circumstances surrounding its publication.

As it is well known, on the verge of the 1970s and 1980s, Saudi Arabia underwent a series of crises due to an exacerbation of some long-term social frictions. The stability of Saudi governance and control was put into question by the twin events of the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca and the uprising in the al-Hasa region (inspired by the Islamic Revolution in Iran and remembered as the “Intifada of Muharram” [Louër 2008, 161–163])—incidentally, both events occurred almost simultaneously in November 1979. While both events are known especially for challenging the religious legitimacy of the Saudi state, particularly in the case of the second one, it is impossible to ignore an important environmental context that can be seen as one of its catalysts. This has been identified by Toby C. Jones as the conflict around the access to the natural—or, in other words, environmental—resources. As has been shown by Jones (see 2010; 2013), the struggle for control and exploitation of these resources (most famously oil but equally as importantly water and agricultural land) in the challenging conditions of the Arabian Peninsula has long been one of the prioritized agendas of the Saudi state. Throughout the earlier part of the 20th century, this struggle took place often with little concern for both the environment and the rights and interests of the local communities. It was also this factor that influenced the events of 1979. According to Jones, it was not incidental that the longer-term unrest (continuing throughout the whole early 1980s) affected the al-Hasa region particularly. The local Shi‘i-majority population of this oil-rich province had been

long expropriated of their land and access to water by the government when the catalyzer of the Iranian revolution led to the outburst of discontent in the last weeks of 1979. While the Saudi state was able to withstand the crisis and suppress the dissent mainly thanks to large-scale repression, the newly revealed vulnerability also pushed the governing circles to make significant policy adjustments. These occurred in two seemingly unrelated areas: first, by putting a renewed stress on the identity of Saudi Arabia as an Islamic state and abode of Islamic orthodoxy, and second, by reorienting its development policy towards more equitable as well as socially and environmentally sensible utilization of its natural wealth (Jones 2010, 217–227; see also Louër 2008, 166).

The establishment of MEPA in 1981 can be clearly seen as a means in the direction of achieving the second goal. Through it, explicit environmental policy was introduced into the governmental agenda of the kingdom, corresponding to the more widespread international trend at the time. It promised to reconcile the demands of development with the concerns for the environment. At the same time, the fact that the newborn Saudi governmental agency decided to produce a conceptually “Islamic” document to set the program and general tenets of its action may be viewed as an attempt to merge this endeavor also with the first goal of enhancing the “Islamic” identity (apparently, the preparation of the *Islamic Principles* was one of the first MEPA’s actions, considering the time, which the preparation of the document took). Arguably, this provides us with an important context for analyzing the content of the document, too.<sup>102</sup>

Looking at this, we may, on the one hand, see clear commonalities with the discourse of the other early commentators on “Islam and the environment” reviewed above. The paper is divided into four sections (plus the conclusion), and it is especially the first, introductory section, that reflects and elaborates the shared conviction already defined as being universally present in the discourse (see 3.3.2): this is a conviction about the actuality and determinacy of the normative “Islamic view” of the environment. In spelling out the general relations within the universe (*kawn*)<sup>103</sup> and between man and nature, the document departs

<sup>102</sup> It also comprises an important example of the direct influence of „material“ environmental conditions (i.e., the actual environmental problems eliciting a reaction) on the Islamic environmental discourse—an area that goes virtually unexplored in the existing writings on Islam and the environment.

<sup>103</sup> Arabic terms for the discussed concepts may be consulted on pages 1–24 of the document as paginated from the rear.

from the basic creationist framework stressing the origin of the environment in God's creation together with its elementary proprieties of perfection, integrity, and beneficialness to man (Ba Kader et al. 1983, 13). As for the relationship of the environment to man, the *Principles* stipulate the basic hierarchical framework governing the creation. This renders man as a *khalīfa* (the one "given inheritance," *ustukhlifa*), standing above the environment (and by extension, the whole universe, *kawn*) as a holder of a "special position." This special position is at the same time accompanied by the relation of subservience and responsibility to God (ibid.), establishing the basis for the moral obligation toward the environment. Here, the posture of the authors also does not essentially diverge from Nasr and Manzoor (see 3.2) and the notions prevailing in most other (especially early) articulations of the discourse.

In close sequence, the first significant divergence, though, begins to appear. The document seems to go further in this anthropocentric outlook by attributing to nature what may be viewed as more or less strictly an *instrumental* role. This is well evident in that the authors explicitly distinguish a twofold purpose in nature: on the one hand, the "utilization, development and subjugation for man's benefit and for the fulfillment of his interests," and on the other hand that of "meditation on, and consideration and contemplation of, the universe and what it contains" (Ba Kader et al. 1983, 13). This is even more clearly expressed in another formulation stating that "each known or unknown creature" has two basic functions, and that is "a social function in the service of mankind and a religious function in so far as it evidences The Maker's omnipresence, wisdom, omniscience and omnipotence" (15).

Further correlative to this notion of nature is another aspect that finally brings a clear rift with the philosophizing views of Nasr and Manzoor. This is what may be called the *developmentalist* attitude. Whereas the authors reviewed in the previous chapter heavily criticized the process of modern (economic and industrial) development and held it largely responsible for the ecological crisis (see, e.g., Nasr 1990, 13), the Saudi document states: "The attitude of Islam to the environment, the sources of life and the resources of nature is a positive attitude in as much as it is based on protection and prohibition of abuse and destruction; it is also based on construction and development" (Ba Kader et al., 13). Thus, whereas

for Nasr, as we have seen, the very notion of nature as “resources” is close to sacrilegious, in the *Principles*, its is the primary framing of nature, accompanied by the implicit assumption that the resources ought to be managed sensitively and justly without inflicting harm on the environment.

More concrete tenets corresponding with this purpose are then elaborated on in the following three sections of the document, focused on the elements of nature that are to be protected,<sup>104</sup> categories of environmental harms (Ba Kader et al. 1983, 18–19), and “legislative rules of Islamic law” (20–23) related to environmental conservation. The core of these tenets, as proposed by the Saudi authors, is then the maxim that the utilization of natural resources (which is by itself completely lawful and unobjectionable)<sup>105</sup> must occur without causing harm or damage of any kind and in a way in which the resources are conserved for future usage (14, 16). Here, the role of Islamic normativity also finally emerges. This is to play a regulative role in two main ways: first, through invoking an individual moral obligation (20) and second, through establishing the basis of the legislative and punitive action on the part of the ruler. Notably, the state authority has an important place in the authors’ conception, as the legal treatment of environmental issues drifts toward the statutory authority of the state (rather than civil-legal relations), which is entrusted with many important tasks stemming from the collective nature of the environmental stewardship, e.g., determining the hierarchy of interests (both of the society and the individual), setting norms and technical standards, and undertaking planning for both the conservation and development (see 20–23). This can eventually be viewed as the document’s main synthesizing vision.

Throughout the text, the authors characteristically vindicate their propositions by referring to excerpts and concepts of Islamic scriptural sources to support their argumentation. Already, with Manzoor, we have evidenced the widening of the portfolio of these concepts. Except for drawing on the already familiar ones, particularly *khilāfa*, and *āyāt*, the Saudi text further supplements this repertoire, which thus already acquires the contours of the catechism

---

104 Namely water, air, and biota (see Ba Kader et al. 1983, 15–17).

105 The uncritical attitude towards development is mirrored, e.g., in the statement that “all acts aiming at achieving good and ensuring benefit such as satisfying human wants, ensuring services and developing agriculture, industry, and means of communications, should be carried out without causing damage, injury or corruption of any sort” (Ba Kader et al. 1983, 18).



described above (2.2).<sup>106</sup> The text recalls a number of hadiths<sup>107</sup> to underpin the general norms prohibiting pollution and mistreatment of animals—these would later typically figure in different genres of the discourse. And while already Manzoor (1984, 157–158) stressed the vital role of shari‘a in addressing the issues of the environment, the Saudi text promotes it even more extensively, further developing this notion by employing concrete legal concepts, particularly the “legal maxims” (*maqāṣid*), and the notion of public good (*maslaḥa*) (Ba Kader et al. 1983, 16–19; cf. 2.2.2.k).<sup>108</sup> In contrast, the text is free of any reference to *tawḥīd* as a principle establishing unity between man, God, and nature—this may be likely attributed to the fact that its extension behind the notion of Godhead would belie the Saudi Salafi orthodoxy, putting special stress on the notion of monotheism. Notably, the text also points out the systematic prohibition of intoxicants and drugs in Islam as a means of „conservation of [man’s] social and physical environment against all forms and kinds of corruption, harm, damage, and pollution“ (19), which may serve as an illustration of the versatility of the demarcation of environmental matters as viewed from religious perspective (see also Chapter 5).

Overall, the *Islamic Principles* thus present a first example of phenomena that will be further encountered throughout many of the following pages: that from the same “environmental verses” and concepts of the Qur’an can be derived markedly different tenets and sentiments. Obviously, this returns to different motivations and expectations. Whereas the discourses of Nasr, Manzoor, and Sardar, analyzed in the previous section, were concerned mainly with questions of abstract nature and the broader historical-philosophical debate (and this is even if Manzoor’s text already displays a shift towards more pragmatism), the concern of the MEPA, the IUCN, and the Saudi Arabian authors was markedly different. In a

<sup>106</sup> In a novel way, the authors, for example, directly connect the motive of „signs“ (*āyāt*) to particular natural phenomena like wind and allude to other Qur’anic mentions of wind as corresponding to the environmental „functions“ of air and the atmosphere. In relation to animals and plants, their „mandatory“ praising of God and the virtue of forming communities is mentioned (*ibid.*, 16–17; see also 2.2).

<sup>107</sup> Among these figures, for instance, the dictum „People share three things: water, pasture and fire.“ The prohibition of the abuse of animals is then stressed by a series of hadiths narrating the punishment of abusers. (Ba Kader et al. 1983, 15–16).

<sup>108</sup> For example, tenets like „damage or harm cannot be eliminated or removed by causing similar or more damage “ or „one should opt for the least of all evils“ are applied to the case of pesticides, the use of which, according to the authors, cannot be fully avoided yet „should be carefully and precisely assessed, each in its own situation, circumstances and value“ (Ba Kader et al. 1983, 19).

much more limited space, the authors set out to define principles that would be much more directly applicable, namely, *legal and administrative tenets* upon which the agenda of *management* of the environment and its resources could be based. In his preface to the document, Abdulbar al-Gain, the vice-president of MEPA and apparently the coordinator of the project, condenses this concern by the assertion of “the insufficiency of the present legislation now applied in contemporary societies and its inadequacy to achieve the required protection of the natural environment” (Al-Gain 1983, 9). The *Islamic Principles* then aim to fill this gap. Their grounding in Islamic concepts and normativity is substantiated by the conviction that “legislation becomes more effective and useful when it emanates from a nation's creed and when it represents its cultural and intellectual heritage” (ibid.).<sup>109</sup>

This also results in a marked thematic and discursive difference. Most notably, the *Islamic Principles* avoid discussing the substance and causes as well as the culprits of the ecological crisis. In fact, the notion of crisis in its complexity is rather absent from the document, too. Instead, the notion of evil identified above as the incipient moral motive acquires a more distinct form—that of the explicitly defined environmental *problems* to be tackled and solved. Instead of a moral and epistemological reform and changing the trajectory of modern civilization based on Islamic ethical and metaphysical knowledge, the Saudi authors aim to set the boundaries of permissible and prohibited based on—and this is another important difference—the strong notion of Islamic normativity.

In this sense, it is not difficult to see the specific way in which Islamic law is matched to the problem that it is supposed to regulate and the particular normativity is constructed. The document employs characteristic terms of “conservation,” “preservation,” and “sustainable utilization” and lists the areas of concern (like the elements that are to be protected, i.e., water, air, and biota, as well as the anticipated harms), which are consistent with the environmentalist canon, and derived from the practical needs which the norm is to fulfill. The direct quotations from the Qur'an and hadith play rather a secondary, „supportive“ role in this regard (they serve mostly to indicate the general relevance of the environment) as the decisive role in setting the actual norm is played by the

---

<sup>109</sup> One may note the concord with the instrumental approach towards religious environmentalism in the IUCN (see above; cf. Holdgate 1999, 185).

utilitarian principle of *maqāṣid* and its main underlying maxim of „inflicting no harm“ (see 2.2.2.f). This also leaves open the possibility of discerning what comprises harm on different (especially expert) grounds. As far as this flexible attitude applies, there is also no reason for a substantial conflict with the precepts of environmental law in its „Western“ or „secular“ version—one which may be characteristic of other legal areas, most notoriously the penal law or various cultural norms.<sup>110</sup>

The last question that remains to be discussed is that of the impacts of the document. The first important thing which is to be mentioned is that the publication of the *Islamic Principles*, accompanied by the establishment of MEPA as a specialized environmental protection body in the Saudi state, together with the renewed stress on religious identity, led to a temporary surge of publications, indicating a wider interest in formulating conservation principles through an Islamic lens (cf. Llewellyn 1982; 1983; 1984; Bakhashab 1988). This was, however, rather ephemeral and short-lived and, most significantly, marginal in comparison with other areas of promotion of the Saudi religious ideology both domestically and abroad. In fact, the majority of the authors of the document, as well as its promoters, eventually took their engagement as a one-time issue and did not become significant voices in spreading the Islamic “environmental message,” which also did not occupy any noticeable, important place in the Salafi *da‘wa* emanating from the kingdom over the following years. Still, two authors and members of the preparatory team, Mawil Izzi-Dien, and Othman Llewellyn, subsequently became advocates of the Islamic environmental discourse in their own right, which must be seen as important evidence of the effect of networking (see also Chapter 5).

As for the direct impact of the text, this, as in many other cases, remains difficult to precisely determine. Its circulation could have been non-negligible. In 1994, the paper was reprinted, and in the preface to the second edition, Al-Gain claimed 85,000 copies to be distributed (Al-Gain 1994, viii). With regard to the

---

<sup>110</sup> Interestingly, the coordinator of the publication Abdulbar al-Gain, is largely outspoken about the deliberate *construction* of the Islamic-environmental normative framework, expressing promise that it will be a „basic milestone on the path of connecting Islam with one of the most complicated and useful branches of the applied sciences“ (Ba Kader et al. 1983, 10)—which must be seen as remarkable in the light of the otherwise prevailing primordialist stance among many authors. This confirms the hypothesis that will be yet repeated, namely that primordialism evolved only later as a characteristic posture within the discourse.

proselytizing activity of the Saudi organizations at the time, it is thus probable that the document reached various geographical locations and may have informed a variety of actors about both the idea of the link between Islam and the environment itself and the basic concepts employed for its establishment. The exact extent of this influence remains unknown as only a minority of the authors in the discourse attribute their ideas to specific sources other than the Qur'an and hadith.<sup>111</sup> In any case, while the *Islamic Principles*, as already mentioned, keep being remembered as a milestone and may have become an important inspirational source at a particular time, the text of the document is rarely quoted itself—which may be attributed to the fact that especially the following decade brought about a number of more elaborate and detailed studies and perhaps also to its all too overtly developmental attitude, controversial from other standpoints (not to mention the link to the Saudi state).

Finally, in the “material” realm, there is little to be found, too. Concerning Saudi Arabia, the “environmental turn” occurring in the kingdom, of which the paper is an example, remained rather discursive and short-lived. The country remained firmly on its developmental path, acquiring even more wealth from the exploitation of its natural resources and investing it in grand infrastructural projects of very questionable environmental impact (see Jones 2010, 227–235), in welfare and even luxury of (especially particular segments of) its society, and not least in the engagement in the regional political and military conflicts (including, over a long term, building its own powerful armed forces) which, as it may be argued, aimed in the first place at promoting both hard and soft power of the Saudi state and by extension of the ruling dynasty. Accordingly, Saudi Arabia, now more than thirty years after the publication of the document, hardly has the status of a “green hub” of the region, and its environmental indicators remain rather poor even in comparison with some other Middle Eastern countries, which invested in a different kind of geopolitical identity. The developmental, state-centric, and utilitarian overtones of the document may be seen in a retrospective as a correlative to this development. This all corresponds with the fact that neither Saudi Arabia became a hub of the Islamic environmental discourse itself and the Saudi institutions themselves later reneged on the original

---

<sup>111</sup> I have already noted this methodological problem in the introductory chapter (cf. 1.1)

idea of framing the environmental law in the kingdom through religious norms and accepted a more standardized kind of statutory law—a problem to which I will return in the last part of this chapter (4.3). Lastly, the publication of the *Islamic Principles* also comprised rather an isolated attempt on the part of the IUCN to cooperate with Muslim actors on framing the conservationist protection in religious terms. Its activity was, however, shortly thereafter supplemented and eventually overtaken by a second global ENGO, the World Wildlife Fund.

#### 4.2.1.b *The Assisi Declaration*

It was only three years after the release of the *Islamic Principles* that another institutionally sponsored statement connecting Islam and environmental conservation appeared. This time, it took a different form of a *declaration*. Similarly to the *Principles*, the Muslim Declaration on Nature (Naseef 1986), issued as a part of the so-called Assisi Declarations in 1986, remains to be widely remembered as a watershed in the development of the Islamic discourse on the environment and occasionally quoted from. And similarly to it, the context of its release is important for determining the document's status.

Like in the previous case, the release of the Declaration was connected to the efforts of a major ENGO to facilitate the spread of environmental education and „values.“ This time, it was not the IUCN but its sister organization, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and it is possible to say that its role in the genesis of the document was even more pronounced. To follow its history, we must go back to 1981. In that year, the presidency of the WWF was acquired by Prince Philip, the consort of the British Queen Elizabeth II and a popular member of the British royal family. It was during his tenure, apparently connected to the efforts to enhance the popularization of environmental protection, that the WWF decided to organize a conference in Assisi. Its aim was to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the organization, and eventually, a decision was made to make a connection to religion. Later, Prince Philip attributed this idea to himself and recalled the motivation for summoning the conference in the given format as follows:

WWF was founded in 1961, so 1986 was its 25th anniversary. There

was much discussion about where to have the anniversary international conference, and in the end Assisi was chosen, for fairly obvious reasons. [Assisi was the home of St. Francis, patron saint of wild animals] The plan was for the "secular" conference to take place in the town, but I thought that it would be a good idea to take advantage of Assisi to try to get the major religions to take an interest in the conservation of nature [...] In the 1980s WWF International was trying to do three things around the world: raise money, develop conservation projects and educate the public. The first two things were fine, but the last one had real difficulties. I argued that the kind of education we were doing through articles and lectures and books and films and things of that sort only reached the educated and probably only the middle classes in the various countries. The people that we needed to get to were the ones who lived in the areas of greatest risk, and the areas where the potential for biological diversity was highest. It occurred to me that the people who could most easily communicate with them were their religious leaders. They are in touch with their local population more than anyone else. And if we could get the local leaders to appreciate their responsibility for the environment then they would be able to explain that responsibility to the people of their faith (Prince Philip 2003)

This plan, which has been shown above to correlate with a wider trend (the very testimony of Prince Philip shows that throughout the 1980s, the idea of secularization and the inevitable decline of religion was finally broken, and religion became again regarded as influential and capable of inciting a positive social change) was finally realized. Upon Philip's suggestion, WWF invited representatives of five major traditions: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. Eventually, a format was chosen to give each tradition space to articulate its own declaration, explained by Prince Philip as to avoid "any business of trying to achieve any ecumenical solution" which could drag the discussion into the issues of different religious "dogma"; this was purported to enable the "religions" to communicate among each other, yet to keep the focus on the problems of conservation (Prince Philip 2003). The final versions of the declarations were issued at Basilica di S. Francesco in Assisi, Italy, on September 29, 1986. The texts of the declarations were subsequently disseminated by the WWF, and the event was medialized (cf. Suro 1986). Here, we may also finally proceed to the Islamic element of the whole initiative.

As a representative of Islam, the WWF invited Abdullah Omar Naseef, the Secretary General of the Muslim World League (MWL), an organization

which has been described above (4.1.2.c). This choice may seem odd, especially given the fact that Naseef seems to not have been active in the Islam-environment nexus beforehand, and the theme does not figure among his own ample publication and other activities. Nevertheless, it is less surprising once we consider that the whole initiative simply must have made *some* choice to select a representative to give an authoritative statement on behalf of „Islam“—an organizationally decentralized assemblage lacking a single ecclesiastic authority. Whether the already established ties between the Saudi religiopolitical establishment (from which Naseef was essentially recruited) and the world conservationist movement seen in the previous chapter (or, e.g., the diplomatic rapport between the British and Saudi royal houses tied by a long-term geopolitical partnership) played some role in this choice is not clear, and neither is clear whether the content of the *Islamic Principles* issued some three years earlier directly influenced the text of the statement (it is rather probable). Nevertheless, it was eventually upon Naseef (and possibly his aides) that he articulated the text of the Muslim Declaration on Nature.

Whereas the goal of the *Principles* was to formulate an expert-centered foundation for governmental policy and legislation, the goal of the Declaration, as already evident from the Prince Philip’s account, was to produce a more accessible statement serving the purpose of popularization that would be simultaneously representative of the whole tradition of Islam. The text that was produced was thus, among other things, much shorter and limited to a couple of basic propositions. This must also be—together with the declaratory form—seen as the most distinct novel feature of the text, adumbrating a number of later-time initiatives (see, e.g., ISESCO 2002b; IFEEES 2015). Consequently, whereas the hitherto discussed texts (and this hold largely even for the *Principles*) proposed an articulation of Islamic tenets for environmental conservation as a distinct *possibility* to be realized through interpretation of the extant ethical or legal injunctions, Naseef’s statement spoke in a different tone and presented these tenets as largely inherent and identical with the tradition and the faith.

This is evident in the wordplay which the text employs to expose the nexus it wants to establish, attributing to „Islam“ meanings of both „submission“ and „peace“: the submission to God brings peace within man, between men, as

well as between man and nature (Naseef 1986, 10). The Islamic ethics of environment, as well as concrete legal precepts, are presented as being readily at disposal: „Numerous [...] jurists and scholars developed legislations to safeguard water resources, prevent over-grazing, conserve forests, limit the growth of cities, protect cultural property and so on. Islam’s environmental ethics then are not limited to metaphysical notions; it provides a practical guide as well“ (12). As it will be yet discussed, this comprises an important facet that would later become dominant in the discourse, as the initial contemplative mode would be overcome and the “Islamic environmental ethic” would be largely treated as one unified and self-evident concept (thematically corresponding to the content of its virtual catechism). Another distinct feature that can be singled out is the more pronouncedly *apologetic* nature of the discourse—even though the apologetic overtone could also be distinguished in the previous texts (and is characteristic for the religious discourse of this kind in principle as it has been and will be yet discussed; see 5.2). While Naseef does not deny that „our [i.e., as Muslims] actions often undermine the very values we cherish“ and acknowledges the tendency to act „contrary to the environmental dictates of Islam, “this does not diminish his presentation of Islamic values as perfect and capable of creating „a true Islamic alternative, a caring and practical way of being, doing and knowing, to the environmentally destructive thought and action which dominates the world today“ (12).

In other respects, Naseef’s text embraces the same general concepts that have been already expounded above: *tawhīd* (in the sense of integral nature of the world and existence created by God), *khilāfa* („trusteeship“) and *ākhirā* (the afterlife implying accountability for one’s actions), the character of Islam as a „middle path“ (akin to Manzoor’s principle of *i’tidāl*, „moderation“). To further support the clarity of the „Islamic position,“ Naseef also quotes three (generally widely quoted; see 2.2.2.j) hadiths dealing with the benefit of planting trees and greenery of the world, a historical example of Izz al-Din ibn Abd al-Salam’s (d. 1262) incorporation of animal’s rights into his writing and the historical institutions of *ḥimā* and *ḥarīm* (for their discussion see 2.2.2.k) as examples of the application of these principles by Muslims. The relevance of these principles is also stressed by the notion of their applicability to current areas of concern, e.g.,



biotechnology and nuclear energy, that one has to „have an opinion about“ because he „will be accountable for what mankind has wrought with these devices in the Hereafter“ (Naseef 1986, 11–12). Remarkably, the MWL head, though, does not provide a categoric view on these technologies—in a reverberation of the guiding approach of the *Principles*, the resolution comprises of weighing the „environmental costs and benefits“ of the given action (ibid.). Eventually, the statement is supplemented by the mix of moral appeal (as to be effective, the „values“ of Islam must be „imbibed“ into all aspects of life and action so that there is no difference whether one acts as a „scientist,“ „technologist,“ „economists,“ „politician, “or as a „Muslim“) and the assertion of the necessity to uphold legislation („Shariah should not be relegated just to issues of crime and punishment, it must also become the vanguard for environmental legislation.“ [12]).<sup>112</sup>

Equally, as in the previous case, the direct impact of the Assisi declaration is difficult to establish. But judging from the subsequent development of the discourse, it, at the time of its release, hardly traversed the limited niche of Western conservationist circles or fulfilled Prince Philip’s expectation of getting to the people living „in the areas of greatest risk and the areas where the potential for biological diversity was highest“ (2003). Ultimately, the main effect of both of the early institutional statements, which emerged in the 1980s, seems to be that they tested the viability of articulating „Islamic tenets“ for environmental conservation in an accessible format, established a continuity upon which other actors in future could build and set a precedent for other activities of this kind, which would, eventually, have greater effect.

#### **4.2.2 Other Interventions from the West: The Establishment of the ARC and its Continued Activism**

From what has been shown above, it is clear that the activity of secular organizations has presented a significant intervention in the development of Islamic discourse on the environment. In a situation wherein the scattered

---

<sup>112</sup> Arguably, such a statement would be filtered out in a contemporary document of this kind wherein the stipulation of „punishments“ grounded in Islamic law would certainly cause controversy.

statements of Muslim intellectuals failed to stir a tangible public interest or even to establish a sustained debate on the topic, it succeeded in inciting a production of new texts that, even if possessing no immediate direct effect in policy-making, presented a clear innovation and outlined the future possibilities of addressing the theme of the environment from the religious perspective. This now acquired a more apologetic and succinct form focused on winning the hearts and minds of the imagined community of the „people of faith” (cf. Prince Philip 2003) and convincing them to take part in conservation activities in accordance with the principles promoted by these organizations (and the more general mainstream consensus of the post-1960s institutionalized environmentalism).

Significantly, the WWF (in contrast to the IUCN, which did not follow up with its participation in preparing the 1983 *Islamic Principles*) continued with these efforts. These seem to have been coordinated and driven predominantly by the activity of Martin Palmer, an Anglican theologian by education and the founder and director of the International Consultancy of Religion, Education and Culture (ICOREC). Palmer co-organized the Asissi event and initiated the establishment of a Network on Conservation and Religion (NCR) as a specialized body within the WWF, which later morphed into the ARC, of which he became a secretary-general (see below; Jensen 2008a; Jensen 2008b).

Before that, the next impactful intervention on the part of Palmer and the WWF, related specifically to the Islamic discourse, occurred in the form of the publication of a book that must be seen as significant. In 1992, WWF sponsored a volume published by the London-based Cassell publishing company under the title *Islam and Environment* (Khalid and O'Brien ed. 1992). The publication, issued as part of a broader series on religions and ecology, stands out as probably the first book devoted fully and specifically to the topic (at least if we take into consideration the broader thematic orientation of both Nasr's treatise and the volume edited by Sardar; cf. Nasr 1990; Sardar 1984a). Significantly, Palmer invited as its co-editor Fazlun Khalid, who, as we will later learn, would become one of the most distinguished representatives of the attempts to convert the Islamic discourse on the environment into a social movement. The second co-editor was Joanne O'Brien, a writer working as a consultant to WWF, The World Bank, the World Council of Churches UNESCO, and UNDP (see Myriad n.d.) and

the author of popularization books on world religions frequently co-authored with Palmer. Given that the volume may be viewed as one of the incipient expressions of the efforts to build an independent community of Muslim environmental activists, I will treat it in more detail in the next chapter (5.1.1). Still, the principal role of the WWF in inciting the publication cannot be stressed enough and evidences the significant role of the organization in the networking process that is conducive to the development and proliferation of the discourse. A similar role was further played by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), established three years later. By looking at its institutional history and activities, it is also possible to further account for the influence of secular organizations on the discourse.

#### 4.2.2.a *The Alliance of Religions and Conservation*

The origins of the ARC as a specialized body focused on the promotion of religious-environmental discourse return to 1995. In April of that year, an international Conference on Religion, Land, and Conservation was organized in Ohito, Japan, under the auspices of WWF and ICOREC. The meeting in Ohito was followed by a Summit on Religions and Conservation in Windsor Castle in May 1995, where the Ohito Declaration on Religions, Land and Conservation, previously discussed at the Conference in Ohito, was formally adopted. Among the participants of the gathering were representatives of Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Baha'i, Daoist, Jainist, and Sikh (the latter four were previously not represented during the Assisi conference) traditions as well as of Mokito Okada Association, which hosted the original meeting in Japan. The Windsor event was a culmination of an important process. The group of actors that had already been engaged for some time in establishing a connection between religion and ecology and making the "faiths" virtual stakeholders in the environmentalist agenda under the heading of WWF eventually opted to create a new formal organization. The organization was called the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC n.d.a).

Before proceeding toward the account of ARC activities, it is useful to briefly look at the process of its establishment and the Ohito Declaration itself, which may illustrate the general orientation and approach of these activities. What may be seen as noteworthy is that in 1995, Fazlun Khalid was accorded the chairmanship of the conference, which led to the adoption of the Ohito Declaration, which indicates close cooperation between him and the organizers (ARC 1995). The declaration itself emerged as a multi-confessional document (something which the organizers of the Assisi declarations preferred to avoid per account of Prince Philip [2003; see above]) of a more complex structure and practical focus. In contrast to the authoritative statements focused on proposing concrete ethical (or legal) norms (as we have seen; see Ba Kader et al. 1983; Naseef 1986), the imaginary permeating the Ohito Declaration demands in the first place that religious leaders would “emphasize environmental issues within religious teaching” and encourages the communities of faith to engage in sustainable practices (ARC 1995). In other words, it conceives of “Islam and ecology” (as well as other traditions) as more of a *movement* than a concept or a norm.

The engagement of Fazlun Khalid, instead of the WML representative, may well mirror this shift of outlook. Khalid became a pioneering actor in what may be viewed as a new trend of “Islamic environmentalism,” operating as a social movement and identical to a distinct section of the Islamic environmental discourse, focused on advocacy activities basically along the lines of secular environmental activism. He was certainly more liberal and moderate than the Saudi government or the World Muslim League was and could ever be (Khalid, for example, would not promote the application of shari‘a in the area of „crime and punishment“ and relate it to conservationist efforts [cf. Naseef 1986; see above]). As it is apparent, also in this case, the WWF, as a secular organization, thus significantly influenced the production of the discourse by selecting a legitimate speaker. Moreover, it seems undisputable that the high-profile position given to Khalid by the WWF and the ARC contributed to the success of his initiative of the IFEES as the first and still the most successful Islamic ENGO (see 5.1.1).

The Ohito Declaration is, correspondingly, characterized mainly by its open, liberal, and non-confessional tone. Most of its assertions are general, such as that “environmental understanding is enhanced when people learn from the example of prophets and of nature itself.” The text raises questions about the distinction between “quality of life” and “higher standards of living” (preferring clearly the former) and between “local/Indigenous wisdom” and “current scientific information” (calling for mutual consultation); the need to subject functioning of markets to spiritual needs and issues of health and justice are stressed, too. The Declaration also exhorts its addressees to “promote the role of women in environmental sustainability”—something which is not so frequently present in the Islamic discourse (ARC 1995). What is perhaps the most marked difference from the Assisi declarations is also that its “recommended courses of action” are addressed primarily to the “religious leaders” and what may be called the religious establishment. This corresponds to the initial, remarkably self-critical assertion from the introduction that “faith communities are not taking effective action to affirm the bond between humankind and nature, and lack accountability in this regard” (ibid.)—again something, under which actors like Naseef would perhaps not so readily subscribe.

Overall, the Ohito declaration represents a specific document that is not frequently recalled within the Islamic discourse as an important milestone (except for directly implicated circles like the IFEES), which may be attributed to the fact that it lacks any explicit references to Islamic themes. Still, it may be seen as an important illustration of the core assumptions upon which the ARC was established and by which it further guided its activities. Over the following almost two decades, ARC grew into an ambitious project of considerable proportions, which was able to sustain a continuous series of activities focused on engaging religious leaders and communities in embracing an active role in conservation efforts. A great number of gatherings, talks, declarations, commitments, projects, plans, and medialized events—many of which undoubtedly contributed to the stated goal of dissemination of environmental consciousness—were organized and produced.<sup>113</sup> The ARC was able to sustain this extent of activity thanks to the generous support of other stakeholders, like the WWF and the World Bank (its

---

<sup>113</sup> Most of them are recorded and archived at the ARC’s website, [arcworld.org](http://arcworld.org).

representatives, together with BBC World Service, were invited to the founding ceremony; see ARC n.d.a) as well as the continuing sponsorship of the British royal family and Prince Philip (dozens of other future important events would be hosted at the illustrious venue of Windsor Castle). Yet despite this notable measure of institutional support, the eventual outcomes of this long-term campaign (at least as far as specifically the Islamic discourse is concerned) must be seen critically. The problems that the ARC encountered can be illustrated by a closer look at two exemplary initiatives attempting to engage Muslim actors and their results.

#### *4.2.2.b The Limits of the ARC Action: Muslim 7 Years Action Plan to Deal With Climate Change and Beyond*

In 2007, ARC, in cooperation with UNEP (which would later overtake its agenda; see below), launched a new initiative aimed at developing „a significant and innovative program to work with the world’s major faiths to address issues of climate change and the natural environment through helping them develop long term environmental action plans, offering practical models of engagement with these great global issues based on their own beliefs, strengths and outreach“ (Colwell et al. 2009, 13). As an outcome of this initiative, a series of 7 years „action plans“ on the part of an array of faith communities and organizations emerged, among them also a Muslim one.

The work on the plan began in 2008. To facilitate the preparation of analogous plans by different faith groups and disparate organizations, the ARC prepared a unified guideline, which outlined a desired structure of the plans (comprising of 7 „key areas in which many of the world’s major faith traditions can have huge impact on environmental action through their own resources, traditions and beliefs,“ among them the use of their own assets, education, lifestyles, advocacy, etc. [Colwell et al. 2009, 17]). Subsequently, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, as well as a British NGO, Earth Mates Dialogue Center, were engaged in the preparation of the plan on the part of its Islamic section.

The initiative began with the workshop “Islam and Environment: Towards a Muslim Seven Year Action Plan,” held in Kuwait between October 12 and 14, 2008, which, according to the final version of the Plan, was attended by 22 participants, „Islamic NGOs, academics, government figures and Muslim environmental activists and specialists from 14 countries“ (see EMDC 2009a, 7). Within the framework, another workshop was conducted half-year later by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs on March 11–12, 2009. Finally, the definitive version of the Action Plan was adopted at the conference held at Istanbul Fatih University on July 6–7, 2009.

According to the press release by ARC, the „historical“ conference was attended by „some 200 key Muslim leaders, scholars, civil society members and government ministries from Islamic civil society.“ The Egyptian and Palestinian muftis Ali Gum‘a and Ekrama Sabri, Saudi Arabian Scholar Salman al-‘Awda, and Lebanese Hizbullah-affiliated Shi‘i cleric Muhammad Hussain Fadlallah were among the attendees, along with representatives of Kuwaiti, Turkish, Bahraini, Moroccan, Indonesian and Senegalese environmental and awqaf ministries; support and endorsement came also from ISESCO and Yusuf al-Qaradawi (see ARC 2009a; EMDC 2009b). Finally, the plan was „launched“ as a part of a ceremonial event called *Many Heavens, One Earth* held by UNDP and ARC at Windsor Castle between November 2 and 4, where 31 plans and commitments in total, produced by faith-based groups (covering all major „world religions,“ in addition to separate commitments by different Christian churches) were announced. The importance attached to the initiative by the ARC is attested by the fact that the event was attended not only by its usual host, Prince Philip, but also by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Present were also representatives of major ENGOs, who made their own pledges to cooperate with the faith-based initiatives, and the event was promoted as an overture to the Copenhagen Climate Summit in December of that year (see ARC n.d.b).<sup>114</sup>

Looking at the content of the Muslim 7 Year Plan itself, the document must be seen as remarkable in its aspirations. In distinction to previous ARC-sponsored declarations, the focus shifts away from the sole concentration on

---

<sup>114</sup> The celebration was also attended by Mary Evelyn Tucker from the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology, which points to the already relatively wide breadth of the network of actors coalescing around the initiative (see YFRE n.d.c).

general ethical and moral principles derived from Islamic scriptural sources. Instead of theological assumptions, the text began with an overview of the expected ramifications of climate change presented in a scientific (albeit vague) language. Only then, a brief overview of scriptural tenets, establishing a link to theology, followed (the stress was put particularly on the themes of balance and interdependence of natural systems as well as the prohibition of their destruction). Subsequently, a set of strategic goals and a specific agenda were delineated. The agenda, loosely following the ARC-provided pattern, comprises a mix of rather modest and, in contrast, ambitious goals. In the first category, we find typical (as we will yet see) goals like distributing propagation materials, facilitating the education of imams, „greening“ of hajj, and devising a guide for running „green“ businesses. In the second, however, we find such goals as to develop „two to three“ Muslim cities as „green cities,“ establish Islamic labels for retailed products (presumably based on their environmental impact) „with strict authenticity standards,“ and even to work on the decrease of the emissions from transportation (cf. EMDC 2009a, 13–14; for the shortened version of the plan see also Colwell et al. 2009, 147–149).

This discrepancy and lack of realism in goals (some of which fell obviously out of the organizers’ purview and had not been attained by global ENGOs with billion-dollar budgets and even the UN agencies over decades) can be perhaps attributed to the overall apparent lack of professionalism and feeble nature of the process through which the whole initiative was run. This deficiency may have finally led to what can, in retrospect, hardly be seen otherwise than its failure.

Despite the convening of the Istanbul conference and participation of some influential Muslim actors therein, the preparation of the plan itself seems to have fallen upon the EMDC—a strange and apparently one-purpose organization, which was, during its rather brief existence, headed by Mahmoud Akef. Akef, an Egyptian national, appeared around 2010 in several interviews, posing as the organizer of the Islamic Conference (see, e.g., ARC 2009b). Yet his footprint in Islamic environmental activities vanished shortly thereafter (EMDC was dissolved in 2011, according to the British Company House). The Muslim 7 Year Plan also involved as its basic proposed component the establishment of the new body of



Muslim Associations for Climate Change Action (MACCA) to coordinate all the included activities and create a *waqf* to finance it. The establishment of MACCA registered in the UK as a limited company in 2009 (and notably headed by Tarek Wafiq, an Egyptian architect and holder of a Ph.D. in natural resources and planning from the University of Colorado, who had been active in the field of eco-consulting before, and as a high-positing member of the Freedom and Justice Party became a Minister of Housing in Muhammad Mursi's government between 2012 and 2013) was hailed by the ARC in September 2009 (see ARC 2009b) yet the association apparently never started to function, attracted no further membership and was dissolved in 2011.

In this sense, it is quite ironic that the adoption of the Plan was hailed as a seminal success by Olav Kjørven, the Assistant General Secretary of the UNDP. Upon the meeting in Istanbul, he commented that „the role of Islam could be one of the decisive factors tipping the planet towards a sustainable future. This commitment in Istanbul to a low carbon future can be of historic significance in the path to resolving climate change and other pressing environmental issues. This could turn out to be the largest civil society movement in history“ (see ARC 2009a; also quoted in Schwencke 2012, 1).

Nonetheless, without even the coordinative body coming to an effective existence, the initiative turned out to be more of a facade without any clear relation of representation and bereft of any means whatsoever to fulfill its exaggerated goals. The precinct of Windsor and the presence of Ban Ki-moon could hardly change that. The ARC, still presided over by Martin Palmer at the time, was clearly overstretched in this case and encountered a significant problem: the lack of a viable self-sustained social movement that could realize the plan. Ultimately, the most tangible outcome of the 7 Year Plan seems to be the Muslim Action on Climate Change Conference held in Bogor between 9 and 10 April 2010, formally organized by MACCA but apparently postponed a couple of times and eventually realized thanks to the support of the Indonesian ministries of forestry and the environment, and Indonesian universities—signifying the emerging role of Indonesia as the new hub of Muslim environmentalism (see 5.1.4). Bogor also became the newly announced location of the first Islamic

„green city, “apparently after the originally proposed effort to realize it in Medina was reassessed (see Padden 2010; Mangunjaya 2010b; ARC 2009c; PPIUN 2010).

In this sense, the 7 Year Plan, while signifying an attempt to move the discourse still further towards new functions (i.e., from the mere value-declaration towards the de facto policy-making and on-the-ground projects), showed clear limits of ambitious plans to engage religious identity in climate and environmental action—comprising especially of the lack of a reliable organizational base and means of realization, both ultimately attributable to the non-existence of a genuine grassroots movement. As such, it may be contrasted to a better prepared, much more realistic, and generally (measured by its immediate aims) successful Islamic Declaration on Climate Change of 2015 (IFEES 2015; 5.1.1.c).

Notably, despite the highly questionable results of this initiative, in February 2010, ARC began an attempt to follow up with a successive program, now engaging faith communities (among them Muslim) in sub-Saharan Africa. After the conference in Abuja in 2010 (ARC 2010), a meeting in Nairobi was organized in September 2012, called *Many Heavens, One Earth, Our Continent*, where another series of 7-years plans was launched on the part of Christian, Hindu, and Muslim faith associations active in the sub-Saharan region. The initiative, called in the concomitant press release „the biggest civil society movement on climate change the Continent has seen,“ was funded by the World Bank, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and USAID, and the meeting was attended, among others, by representatives of the Norwegian embassy in Kenya, UNEP and Kenyan Ministry of Environment. The declared aims were to promote tree planting, launch awareness campaigns, broaden environmental education, and provide training in sustainable farming, with the engaged groups expected to be active in mutual dialogue over the following seven years (see ARC 2012).

As such, the meeting was attended by representatives of some ten Muslim organizations or associations, namely Nigerian Qadiriyya and Sudanese Sammaniyya Sufi orders, Ugandan Muslim Youth Assembly (MYAU), Muslim Supreme Council (MSCU), and Muslim Women Association (MWAU), Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council (EIASC), and National Muslim Council of Tanzania (BAKWATA). Each of the six plans, published on the ARC website, includes a short introduction of the given organization, its expected outreach, and

an array of concrete actions to be undertaken over the covered period. Again, many of these plans were formulated in an overtly ambitious manner. For example, the Nigerian Qadiriyya's long-term plan on the environment points out its track record in environmental protection as consisting of participating in ARC's initiatives in 2010 and 2011 and giving schoolchildren "two three tree seedlings to plant at the start of the school year." It also proposes to establish gardens and orchards in its schools and to organize a retail sale of farmed products, organize used plastic bags collection by children (notably grading them in schools based on their performance), organize an extensive tree-planting campaign (which also dominates most other plans) including on cemeteries, develop a variety of educational, popularization and publication activities, launch a "Green FM Radio" station in Kano, lobbying for the construction of plastic bags recycling facility in Kano, and even „fight materialism with Sufism“ through media (QMN 2012). In distinction to earlier ARC-supported declarations, the plans are notably vacant of any explicit links to faith-based tenets but focus only on practical action, perhaps as a result of the policy of the whole initiative (notably, some of the organizations commit to devise such tenets in future; see, e.g., QMN 2012).

Unfortunately, the degree to which these plans were realized is impossible to assess as no ex-post evaluation of the project has been produced by the ARC. It is thus only possible to follow circumstantial evidence. Overall, there are little signs that the long-term and 7-year plans would develop into large-scale conservation initiatives, which would result in mass mobilization and significantly influence the environmental policy in the region, as the talk during the launch of the initiative suggested (cf. ARC 2012). If this had happened, the attention on the part of the media-savvy ARC and the proponents of the „religion and ecology“ field, who are usually highly motivated to promote „positive examples“ of faith-based conservation, could be expected—but is nowhere to be found. It is thus unclear whether children from the Qadiriyya-run schools in Nigeria have begun to collect 100 used plastic bags each week as it had been proposed (see QMN 2012). Although a „green“ radio station has been launched in Nigeria to help farmers with sustainable practices (see DW 2016), it has no apparent link to the Muslim Sufi order.

Therefore, the overall effect of the sub-Saharan initiative, along with the 7-year Climate Plan, must be viewed with a measure of skepticism. Even though this does not mean (and it is rather inconceivable) that they had not *any* effect whatsoever (e.g., in sensitizing particular actors to the importance of environmental issues and making them more open to support and engage in conservationist agenda even if not necessarily within the faith-based framework), the ARC activities (at least in relation to Islam, examined in this work) seem to have suffered from one particular problem: the lack of genuine grassroots support. This is well evident in the fact that once the talked-up initiatory meetings and opening ceremonies (the role of which was generally to incentivize and network „indigenous“ actors for the purpose of the realization of the given plan) passed, the activity quickly receded due to the lack of motivated stakeholders and perhaps also the adequate (human, expert and organizational) resources that the exceedingly ambitious goal would require to realize.

#### 4.2.2.c *Continuation of the Trend*

Testing various approaches, the ARC continued in its mobilization and advocacy campaign up to 2019, when it was finally dissolved, ostensibly because it has fulfilled its mission and, in the words of Martin Palmer, „has done what initially set out to do“ (Silene 2019). This does not, however, mean that the overall strategy established and developed by WWF and later by ARC would cease to exist. ARC's role was, from November 2017, retaken by a special initiative run by UNEP (cooperating with the ARC already from 2007; Colwell et al. 2009, 13) called Faith for Earth, aiming to collectively achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and fulfill the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. Similarly, UNEP continued convening meetings and producing (not least) the Islamic discourse on the environment. Examples of such activities may be seen in the Interfaith World Environment Day celebration on May 31 in Nairobi, organized in collaboration with United Religions Initiative, Africa, the All African Conference of Churches (UNEP 2019), or the booklet *Faith for Earth: A Call for Action* issued in 2020. The latter publication captures well the „globalist“ imaginary of religious

environmentalism promoted within this strand of the Islamic discourse, figuring colored pictures, infoboxes, quotations from distinguished personalities and Islamic scriptures, and bullet lists condensing the tenets of ecotheological ethics. A section devoted to Islam in this document presents, effectively, a paragon of the Islamic “catechism” on the environment, stripped of any controversial (but also specific) points, selection of Qur’anic verses and hadiths (without any commentary), and finally, the Statement of the Fiqh Council of North America (FCNA) on fossil fuel divestment as well as Green Ramadan initiative as examples of practical engagement. Along it, there are also characteristic pictures of mosques, Kaaba, praying Muslims, and a couple of wind turbines from Germany (UNEP and PWR 2020, 35–39).<sup>115</sup> To mention still other activities, faith-based engagement has been coordinated by UNEP at COPs in recent years (UNEP n.d.a; n.d.b). Significantly, neither of the Egyptian and Emirati governments organizing the recent summits (COP 27 and COP 28), though, propped up these initiatives or visibly used their positions of hosting countries to promote the Islamic-environmentalist discourse, not to say, attempted to frame the summits through it. This reflects the overall lack of enthusiasm on the part of Muslim countries’ governments to embrace the discourse, which will be discussed in the next section.

Lastly, the overall picture of the engagement of secular and non-Muslim organizations in the promotion of the Islamic environmental discourse may still be supplemented with the mention of the contribution of global interfaith organizations, most notably the Parliament of World Religions (PWR). Following up with an initiative that took place back in 1893, the renewed tradition of the Parliament, focusing especially on social issues, reaches back to 1993. Since its 2009 session, it has developed an agenda in the area of environmental protection. The rhetoric adopted in PWR’s documents follows what may be called the mainstream climatic agenda: it recalls the scientific consensus on the issue and supports an array of usual policies from the adjustments in one’s own lifestyle to energy savings, green energy transition, stopping of deforestation and others on national and global levels (see PWO 2015, PWO 2022). Among similar initiatives may be counted the 2014 Interfaith Summit on Climate Change and its Statement

---

<sup>115</sup> Notably, among consulting editors, the publication involves the well-known names of J. Grim and M. E. Tucker from the Yale Forum on Ecology, which will be covered in Chapter 6.

(see ISCC 2014) and the World Congress of Faiths, producing the Stockholm+50 Interfaith Statement that connected among other actors representatives of ISESCO, Indonesian Council of Ulema, Nana Firman from Muhammadiyah USA, representatives from various kinds of NGOs and entrepreneurs in “green” businesses (Oikumene 2022).

Overall, the method and orientation of these activities follow up with the trend established already by 1980. As in the case of ARC, their outcomes are worth questioning. Up to this date, they seem to not have succeeded in creating a self-sustained and consolidated movement. Its engagement of Muslim actors and institutions generally remained limited to individual instances of cooperation and rather formal and declaratory participation of religious leaders as signatories and stakeholders. Occasionally, this may have played a role in networking and transmission of ideas. From the discursive perspective, the engagement of secular (or interfaith, for that matter) institutions is following up with the trend established already in the 1980s, too. It may be identified with the instrumentalization of the Islamic discourse to the promotion of externally defined ends. These progressively drifted towards propping up the generic agenda of global conservationist institutions—an agenda for which Islam, in the eyes of the advocates of the connection, should provide moral argument and normative guidance, but significantly, without disturbing the shared consensus. As such, institutional discourse has also become a subject of critique (see Gade 2019). I will return to it in a more detailed assessment later, after examining the institutional engagement originating from yet a different direction: the institutions that can be identified as more distinctively “Islamic” (even if such characterization is inherently problematic as it will be further discussed).

### **4.2.3 The Institutional Engagement Originating in Muslim Countries**

Paradoxically, with the exception of the participation of MEPA at the beginning of the 1980s, they were the „secular“ environmental organizations that pioneered the effort of disseminating the „Islamic“ framing of environmental conservation and gave it the most significant support. Still, to a limited degree and

at least for some time, the same kind of activity also came from organizations that may be viewed as “Islamic” by their declared identity and, more importantly, being funded and directed by the government of Muslim states (even though they, equally as MEPA, comprised modern bureaucratic institutions based on “Western” models). In what follows, I will examine particular examples of this engagement and its outcome.

#### *4.2.3.a Flirting with The Islamic Approach Towards the Global Sustainability Agenda: ISESCO*

The overview of institutional activity in promoting the Islamic discourse on the environment would be incomplete if the ISESCO were omitted. The organization, constituting a branch of the trans-national Organization of Islamic Cooperation, has been in basic terms described above (4.1.2.c). ISESCO began to be active in embracing and promoting the Islamic discourse on the environment at the end of the 1990s. In this regard, it represents a relative latecomer in comparison with the “secular” IUCN and WWF. The efforts of the ISESCO as an expressly “Islamic” organization may simultaneously, at least at face value, seem to represent more “indigenous” agency on the part of Muslim actors. Nevertheless, even in this case, the engagement of the organization must be assessed in a wider context. Also, it was related to the broader international development. This was most immediately the preparation of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. Convening ten years after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the event was set to continue with the promotion of the sustainability agenda and, in line with the policy established already in Rio, followed the idea of multilateralism and the stress put on the engagement of non-governmental actors. ISESCO was invited to join the summit on behalf of the OIC as the biggest and the most comprehensive transnational Islamic organization (cf. Samuel 2010, 110). Remarkably, it opted to frame the sustainability agenda, at least partly, through a specifically “Islamic” lens.

To this end, it also organized an important event, the First Global Conference on the Environment From an Islamic Perspective, which took place in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, between October 23 and 25, 2000. The conference was co-

organized by MEPA and the UNEP. The initial address was given by a member of the Saudi royal family and deputy defense minister Abd al-Rahman ibn Abdulaziz, and it was attended by Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director of UNEP. Several noted Islamic scholars and representatives of the institutionalized national religious establishments were invited—among them Nasr Farid Wasil, the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Akrima Sa‘id Sabri, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and Palestine, Mustafa Abu Sway from the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood-connected scholar Yusuf al-Qaradawi, whose work has been already mentioned and will be still discussed a couple of times (KUNA 2000; EPL 2001; see also Schwencke 2012, 28–29). Significantly, Yusuf al-Qaradawi states in the introduction of his voluminous monograph on Islam and the environment (which I will later use as a primary illustration of the traditionalist scholarly discourse) that he had written the book specifically on demand of the organizers of the event (al-Qaradawi 2001, 8).

The main outcome of the conference was the Jeddah Declaration on the Environment from the Islamic Perspective (WFEIP 2000). The declaration must be clearly viewed as discursively important, representing a continuation of the trend established by the 1983 *Principles* (Ba Kader et al. 1983) and the 1986 Asissi Declaration (Naseef 1986). It also combined features of both documents. Reflecting the typical structure of declarations focused on the environmental agenda of the time, it combined the stating of general moral tenets with an elaboration of more concrete legal principles and obligations. The preamble of the document stipulates general “ethical” relations between man and the environment. As the previously analyzed texts, it asserts an anthropocentric outlook, stating that “Allah has subjugated everything for man to lead a honourable life” (WFEIP 2000, 3), which it subsequently qualifies by already described principles of stewardship (*khilāfa*) and the stress put on the application of shari‘a, presented as comprehensive legal system, as the guiding normative on the issue (4). In contrast to preceding texts, the authors of the declaration decided to underpin their claims with extensive Qur’anic quotations (ibid.). Besides affirming the role of Islamic normativity, the document also refers to the value of the global agenda of environmental conservation, recalling the UN conferences on the matter and Agenda 21. Islamic norms are thus presented as contributive and conducive to the



fulfillment of general aims of the paradigmatic international conservationist strategy, most extensively in areas of education and public health, around which the main thematic part is also structured (cf. 7–8; 10–22).

Overall, the document thus attempts to relate to the global agenda promoted by the international institutions on the highest level basically by rendering them identical (or corresponding in purpose) to specifically Islamic terms and tenets. Like the *Islamic Principles* (cf. Al Gain 1983, 9), the Jeddah Declaration vindicates the reliance on the specifically Islamic norms by the argument of cultural specificity: the Islamic conservation agenda is as especially suitable for Muslim countries (if also in a sense universal and morally superior). In the imaginary of the document, sustainability is to be achieved in these countries along the lines of “enjoining good and forbidding evil” (*al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar*), and this is considered as an argument to “protect our generation from cultural trends that are incompatible with Islamic teachings” (WFEIP 2000, 19–20). Environmental education and awareness are, accordingly, implied to involve an acceptance of limitations on sexual intercourse, dietic laws, and the use of intoxicants (20). Needless to say, the appearance of such cultural norms with a questionable relationship to conservation agenda and environmental matters in the document attests to a strong conservative influence on it (presumably based on the participation of Islamic scholars), which may even be viewed as used as a vehicle for promoting the total vision of the Islamic order, regulating all transactions and relationships within society.

This may also be related to the fact that the document was ultimately largely ignored by ISESCO in what followed. As was already mentioned, one of the aims of the Jeddah conference was to articulate a common “Islamic” statement for the Johannesburg summit, where the ISESCO would be charged with promoting and communicating it (EPL 2001). ISESCO, however, eventually did not use the Jeddah Declaration to this end and produced two other documents instead. The first one was The Islamic Declaration on Sustainable Development, which was adopted about one year later. Significantly, a new platform was created to formulate it, excluding now Muslim scholars. This was The First Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers convened again in Jeddah between June 10 and 12, 2002. A new declaration, adopted therein, presented a much shorter

document, which greatly reduced the space given specifically to Islamic concepts. In fact, it embraced them only in the most general terms, characterizing man as God's "lieutenant" on earth, being given the "gift" and "bounty" of environmental resources, all in sum implying the shared responsibility and obligation of Muslims to protect the environment (ISESCO 2002b). The quotations from the Qur'an and hadith were omitted from the text altogether, together with any reference to a comprehensive legal system of shari'a, which should regulate all human life, concrete legal injunctions, and apologetic overtones casting Islam as the "final divine message for the whole mankind" as it appeared in the *Jeddah Declaration* (WFEIP 2000, 2). In contrast, an article about the protection of human rights and equality of women (the former declaration mentioned women only in relation to a choice of a "healthy spouse" to avoid "genetic abnormalities"; cf. WFEIP 2000, 21) was included. The greater part of the new declaration stayed free from any religious references in favor of addressing concrete problems like international debt, financing, and technology for developing countries, as well as reducing overpopulation (ISESCO 2002b).

The eventual form of the declaration, prepared by ISESCO for the Johannesburg summit, thus presents a significant and marked shift in the discourse. What was ultimately presented to the international community was not only cleaned off the controversial (and ones that would be viewed as obscurantist by many) elements that found their way to the original declaration but also underwent a process of "secularization" to the degree that the Islamic aspect was minimized and where it remained present, it was reframed as a general ethical principle of responsibility and considerate attitude towards the environment, free of normative aspects. As such, apparently, the original tendency of the Jeddah Declaration was ultimately subjected to the professionalism of the staff of environmental ministries of the involved OIC countries, who have probably noticed that the identitarian overtone could cause controversy and embarrassment on the international platforms focused on addressing the practical problems of conservation.<sup>116</sup>

---

116 Conceivably, the discursive shift may have also been influenced by the events of September 11, 2001, which negatively affected the public image of Islam globally and attracted negative attention to Islamist and fundamentalist movements, not least the Saudi-promoted Salafist interpretation of Islam, in some aspects recognizable in the original Jeddah Declaration.

Along with that, ISESCO also prepared for the summit a longer, about 150 pages long brochure called *Islamic World and the Sustainable Development (Specificities, Challenges and Commitments)* (ISESCO 2002a). A major part of it comprised “technical” aspects of the conservation strategy for Muslim countries formulated in the standard language of an internationally coordinated agenda. Still, an outline of the “Islamic” posture found its way into it, too, in the form of a chapter devoted to the “Study on Sustainable Development from the Perspective of Islamic Values and the Specificities of Muslim World.” In its final part, a section built around the Qur’anic quotations was included, albeit still in a manner different from the first Jeddah declaration: the stress was put on the demonstration of the congruence of the Qur’an with the universal ecological principles like ecological balance, biodiversity, non-renewability of resources, integrity of ecosystems and necessity of protection and conservation—all of them underpinned by a relatively broad set of concepts corresponding to the generic catechism like *āyāt*, *mīzān*, *khilāfa*, *amāna* and others (see ISESCO 2002a, 60–86).<sup>117</sup>

As for the future activity of ISESCO in the field, the organization continued to cooperate on the sustainability agenda with global institutions and, within this framework, also kept convening regular meetings of ministers of the environment of the member countries—a practice initiated on the eve of the Johannesburg summit. These meetings also kept issuing declarations in various forms. Yet beginning already with the second such meeting in 2006 (ISESCO 2006), the Islamic framing of environmental agenda largely disappeared from the discourse of the organization (see ISESCO 2010; 2012; Alwajjiri 2014; ISESCO 2015; 2017) and appeared again only in 2019, in the declaration issued by the 8th meeting titled *On the Promotion of Cultural and Religious Roles in the Protection of the Environment and Achieving Sustainable Development*. Significantly, the document, however, does not present the “Islamic tenets” as the main framework for environmental policy-making in Muslim countries, but rather, in its final part, presents the “promotion of the cultural and religious foundations” of environmental action as a specific and limited agenda. This recalls previous documents addressing this theme (including the 2002 Islamic Declaration

---

<sup>117</sup>I have undertaken a detailed analysis of the document in my graduate thesis, see Kolářček 2018.

[ISESCO 2006] but excluding, again, the Jeddah Declaration from 200 [WFEIP 2000]) as well as Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* and UNEP's Faith for Earth initiative and calls, in an inclusive way (comprising consultations among various actors including the non-governmental sector), for the incorporation of the "religious and cultural perspective" (standing along the scientific one) into the area of environmental education as well as for incorporating the latter into the curricula of religious schools and institutions (ISESCO 2019, 5–6). The document abstains from referring to concrete Islamic norms or concepts.

Overall, this history shows that the engagement of the ISESCO in adopting and disseminating the Islamic discourse on the environment was initially rather short-lived and limited as, after the Johannesburg summit, the organization opted for framing its participation in the global conservation agenda in secular terms, and returned to the thematization of Islam only recently and in a different way, treating religion as more of a potentially contributive "cultural" resource, rather than the normatively binding or fundamental principle. The further development and the outcomes of this renewed engagement are yet to be seen.

#### 4.2.3.b *Iran and the Contribution to the Dialogue of Civilizations*

The activities of ISESCO were not the only of its kind. In June 2001, the reformist government of Muhammad Khatami in the Islamic Republic of Iran, wherein the Department of the Environment was chaired by Ma'sume Ebtekar (a former radical student activist partaking in the notorious US embassy occupation in 1979 and now the first woman minister in Iran), convened the International Seminar on Environment, Religion and Culture. Similarly to the 2000 conference in Jeddah, the event was co-sponsored by the UNEP (see Amin 2003, xxxiv) and produced the Teheran Declaration on Environment, Religion and Culture as its outcome.

As in the previous cases, the initiative must be interpreted in a broader context. Though not fully reducible to it, the Seminar convened in Teheran was clearly a part of the strategy of Khatami's reformist government to redefine the position of the Islamic Republic on the international stage and partake constructively on various current agendas, signified by the president's famous

address delivered in the seat of the UN on September 5, 2000 in which he called for a “dialogue among civilizations,” attracting a widespread and positive reception and even prompting the UN General Assembly to declare 2001 the “Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations.” (see Tazmini 2008, 81–84). Obviously, the dialogue on the issue of environmental problems fitted this agenda well, as the “Islamic” view on the environment could be presented as uncontroversial and constructive while still culturally specific. Khatami’s initiative of dialogue of civilizations is also explicitly recalled in the preamble (UNGA 2001, 2).

The text of the declaration consciously locates itself within the succession of previous efforts to address the environmental issues from a religious viewpoint, and in its beginning, it refers, along with UNEP documents, to a couple of events and documents that have been (or will yet be) analyzed in this work, including the ARC-sponsored activities (chiefly the Assisi declarations), the Jeddah Declaration and also the Harvard series of seminars on religion and ecology (see 6.1.2). Along with that, the declaration is rather universalist in its tone and does not give Islam almost any specific treatment (except recalling that the Iranian supreme leader Ali Khamenei himself called for environmental protection and “holy combat” for its sake). Instead, it promotes participative interfaith dialogue (including also scientists and civil society representatives) and a globalized vision of collective responsibility and cooperation. In this regard, it also raises two proposals to convene summits/forums on faith and environment. The rather unusual high profile and aspiration of the event, apparently attributed to it by Khatami’s presidency, can be evidenced by the fact that the Declaration was issued as a letter addressed to the UN Secretary-General with the demand to circulate the attached text among the General Assembly (UNGA 2001). Overall, the content of the document reflects professionalism and political savvy in addressing the top international political circles. In contrast to some of the Saudi-sponsored documents and in spite of the ideological orientation of the Iranian regime, it remained free of any references to Islamic law as a comprehensive and total solution to social problems as well as of overzealous presentation of the specificity or moral supremacy of the “Islamic” view and values.

In 2005, the conference was repeated, chaired by Bagher Asadi, a senior diplomat at Iran’s UN mission in New York, who also edited the proceedings of

the conference (Asadi 2005; see also IISD 2005). With the end of M. Khatami's tenure, activities in this direction ceased, and the country fell into growing isolation under the new populist government of Mahmud Ahmadinejad (Asadi himself was briefly imprisoned in 2013). A short-lived attempt to renew them occurred only after the inauguration of the new reformist government in 2013 (see Niamir-Fuller, Özdemir, and Brinkman 2016).

#### 4.2.3.c *The Royal Al al-Bayt Institute and its Participation*

As a last example of initiatives coming from Muslim countries and to attest to the variability even of the "institutional" discourse, the case of the Jordanian Al al-Bayt Institute (RABI) may be mentioned. RABI poses as an independent NGO, although it is closely affiliated with the Jordanian royal family and serves as its instrument to promote particular Islamic discourses and policies within the Muslim world. The Institute became prominent especially through activities calling for moderation in religious affairs and promoting interfaith dialogue, especially with Christian churches, among them the „Amman Message“ (*Risalat 'Amman*) of 2004 and „A Common World Between Us and You“ open letter of 2007. RABI was able to attract a high-profile group of signatories under both messages and accompany them with a series of other activities. The RABI's engagement in promoting the Islamic environmental discourse occurred as a part of follow-up activities to „A Common World“ letter released by Princ Ghazi bin Muhammad and addressed to the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations, after which regular dialogue facilitated by a series of meetings was established (see CW n.d.a). In 2010, the Institute organized a symposium on the environment in Amman, joined by both Muslim and Christian representatives and academicians (see CW 2010). There, a bilingual Arabic-English booklet titled *The Holy Qur'an and The Environment* was also presented (Bin Muhammad, Shah-Kazemi, and Ahmed 2010). The paper may be, among other things, interesting by its authorship. It was co-authored by prince Ghazi bin Muhammad, a grandson of king Talal and a graduate from Cambridge and later from al-Azhar, professor of philosophy and author of his own right, well-known for his cultural activities, including the sponsorship of RABI and the related inter-faith initiatives.

Another co-author was Reza Shah-Kazemi, a British-based Muslim academician and associate of the Institute of Ismaili Studies.

Divided into four chapters, the greater part of the booklet presents rather familiar and generic concepts of the catechism from *āyāt* to *khilāfa*, condensed in an elegant language. Still, after the exposition of the general ethical tenets, the final, fourth chapter, called „Human Purification and Environmental Responsibility,“ presents a vision that must be viewed as relatively specific within the institutional discourse. This comprises a civic ethical action towards environmental protection, which avoids getting into technical or practical details but invites its readers to „combat the irresponsible actions and attitudes which we see around us, and in us“ through the change of intentions and attitudes, so as one would be able to avoid „trappings of the modern world,“ characteristic of manifold ethical dilemmas (Bin Muhammad, Shah-Kazemi and Ahmed 2010, 39–41). The recipe for that includes Sufi practices like *faqr* (poverty) and *dhikr* (uttering of God’s name), as well as to

recycle, reuse paper and packaging, conserve water, eat less, waste less food, use less energy and power, forego needless luxuries, avoid all extravagances, preserve our natural environment, not pollute, plant trees, support environmentally-friendly goods and products etc., and above all research and inform ourselves as to how to best do this. In short, we must ‘reduce’ our modern lifestyles and our own carbon footprints in every act in our — and our children’s — daily lives (Bin Muhammad, Shah-Kazemi and Ahmed 2010, 41).

As it is evident, the focus is primarily on the individual change of lifestyle. Part of this is also spreading „the holy Qur’an’s good word (about nature)“ further to „change our world“ as the final part of the chapter reads (Bin Muhammad, Shah-Kazemi, and Ahmed 2010, 42–43). As such, the initiative coming from the institute tied to the Jordanian royal family resembles more of the “activist” discourses focused on individual ethical action, which will be discussed in the next chapter. The booklet, occasionally quoted in the Islamic environmentalist cycles, is, among other things, remarkable by originating independently, outside the usual channels of discourse production and circulation. Its impact is, as in other cases, hard to assess. While prince bin Muhammad did not become a significant advocate of the Islamic environmental message as a part of his prolific scholarly and literary output, the participation in the composition of

the booklet may have „converted“ Shah-Kazemi, who approximately from the time of its release began to promote what may be conceived of as the “spiritual,” Sufi-inspired approach to environmental ethics (see also 5.2.1.c).

Notably, prince Ghazi has not been the only member of the Jordanian royal family active in the promotion of the environmental agenda. Among others is Noor al-Hussein, the former queen-consort and widow of King Hussein (d. 1999), who was active in the field for a long time, among other things, through her patronage of IUCN. In her article, published by Project Syndicate in 2015, she has also commented upon the Islam-environment intersection, if mainly just in the form of the approval of the 2015 Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change, which she frames as an expression of the tenet of stewardship common to many different faiths and connects it to the universal importance of conservation. In concord with al-Hussein’s cosmopolitan philanthropist identity, the article is free of any stress on Islamic specificity (see Hussein 2015) and further demonstrates that the framing of ecology through the Islamic lens is by no means hegemonic in the Muslim world and strongly depends on the personal preference of individual actors.



### **4.3 Between High Aims and Limited Results: The Influence of the Institutional Engagement**

As we have seen, the Islamic discourse on the environment emerged originally from intellectual concerns about the viability of the way of life of human civilization in the light of a perceived imminent ecological crisis and its connection to the problem of philosophy and values. Yet, as this section has shown, its broader proliferation would not be fully comprehensible without considering the role of institutions that, from the 1980s, became engaged in the active promotion of the discourse and the sponsorship of related activities.

Remarkably, the role of institutions has remained a rather unacknowledged factor in the development of the Islamic discourse on the environment, with few authors looking into or even considering the history of their engagement (for partial exceptions, see Schwencke 2012; Gade 2019; Idllalène 2021). Arguably, this can be, among other things, ascribed to the prominence of the primordialist outlook in the academic writing on the topic. The imaginary of the environmental values inherently present in the Islamic tradition and spontaneously ensuing from it does not necessitate—and may not even allow for—asking about the role of large institutional bodies following their own, and not always “Islamic” agenda in their conceptualization. Nevertheless, as it has been shown, their role has been considerable, and it is therefore useful to debate their significance as well as their influence on shaping the discourse in a more systematic way.

#### **4.3.1 The Significance of the Institutional Resources**

The institutions, initially represented by IUCN, MEPA, and WWF, and later joined by ISESCO, UNEP, and in some cases also governments of Muslim states, brought into the discursive field a couple of things that individual authors did not dispose of. These included financial resources, the ability to gather and mobilize expertise, medialize, coordinate the release of publications, convene

high-profile events, and eventually also issue declarations and promote them on the top international level of the UN and other platforms. By that, they have been instrumental not only in disseminating the discourse in a practical way but also in endowing it with legitimacy and currency.

This significance of the institutions is apparent, among other things, in their relative primacy in addressing the topic. Even though the institutions were not *the first ones* (which also supports the hypothesis of the primacy of moral motivation), they almost were. When the *Islamic Principles* were issued in 1983 (Ba Kader et al. 1983), there were only a handful of other texts addressing the topic (see Nasr [1968] 1990; Zaidi 1981; Husaini 1980). Along with that, the institutions pioneered a specific genre as a way of disseminating the discourse. This started with the 1986 Islamic Declaration (Naseef 1986), embodying the first quasi-official statement in a succinct form, focused on addressing broad swaths of the public (this is in distinction to the *Islamic Principles*, focused more narrowly on legislation) in an attempt to define the „Islamic position“ on the environmental problems. In 1992, WWF sponsored the first thematic volume focused exclusively on „Islam and the environment“ (Khalid and O'Brien 1992), which brought together a group of authors who subsequently contributed to the development of the field. Throughout the 1990s, WWF and later its affiliate ARC supported Fazlun Khalid in establishing himself as a leading voice of Islamic environmentalism and the founder of the first Islamic ENGO, IFEES (for more on that, see 5.1.1.a). The continuing popularization activity of the ARC throughout the two decades following its establishment clearly contributed to the proliferation of the discourse, too, and although it cannot be established with certainty, it might have been (together with its parent organization WWF) a significant factor in the proliferation of the discourse in Indonesia (see 5.1.4.a) and perhaps also in other Muslim countries (e.g., the African ones). It is possible that the results of this campaign will become more visible over time as the impact of socialization of the „Islamic environmental values,“ e.g., through the school curricula, will take place. Along with that, the influence of the institutions can be further evidenced on a personal level. The cooperation on the preparation of *Islamic Principles* started the life-long interest in the topic by Mawil Izzi Dien, who later became an influential commentator on it (after he also contributed to the WWF-sponsored

volume by Khalid and O'Brien [1992]). The activity of ISESCO (cooperating with the UNEP among other bodies) was then connected to the engagement of another significant and influential voice of Yusuf al-Qaradawi, and the institutions provided a platform for still other actors.

As such, the contribution and influence of the institutional sphere must be seen as principal (rivaled probably only by the influence of the academic sphere with which it also partly intermingled; see 6.1), especially at the particular stage throughout the 1980s and 1990s, wherein it, apparently, catalyzed the emergence of an assemblage—a broad, deterritorialized, but still in an elementary sense integrated network—of actors, who produced a number of important texts that widened the content of the Islamic environmental catechism, secured its circulation and progressively widened its ambit. As it has been shown (and will be further documented), this systematic activity is genealogically related to the emergence of independent activism and other steps toward the broader outreach of the discourse that will be analyzed in the following chapter (see 5.1). It can be assumed that if it were not for the institutions, the proliferation of the discourse would occur at a (probably much) slower pace. Moreover, the institutional engagement also contributed to the development of the discourse itself and widened the repertoire of its expressions.

#### ***4.3.2 Different Motivations and Shift in the Discourse***

In addition to the resources, the institutions have also brought new intentions and motivations into the discourse. If one basic difference from the responses investigated in the previous chapter (3.2.) is to be singled out, it is probably that the institutional discourses have been comparatively less focused on debating the causes of the ecological crisis than on proposing solutions to it—ones of which Islam and the Islamic “code” would be a part. This apparently mirrored the shift in the environmental discourse as a whole, which progressively moved, too, from the debate of the character and origin of the crisis and ruminations about revolutionary changes towards the incrementalism of institution- and capacity-building to achieve practical goals, rendered progressively more complex and structured by the activity of international forums and expert bodies.

The institutions approached the discourse as goal-oriented actors possessing a particular agenda and aims of their own. Thus, in the preparation of the 1983 *Islamic Principles*, two different motivations and interests seem to have coalesced: on the one hand, the Saudi government's interest to connect the newly established environmental agenda in the kingdom with its newly prioritized religious identity, and on the other the effort of the IUCN to apply its new doctrine of „indigenization“ of conservationist policy in practice. This resulted in the production of a document structured around practical goals of environmental policy-making like the regulation and legislation in the areas of water, waste, and pollution, i.e., approaching the theme of the environment mainly from the perspective of *management*. The role of Islam was thus presented in a redefined way, not merely as a source of moral obligation and ethical tenets but as a comprehensive ethical-legal framework to be applied on the state and society level. Specifically, the *Islamic Principles* then represent a model case wherein the notion of personal moral obligation is supplemented and partly also supplanted by the vision of the all-powerful state entity, setting and enforcing the environmental principles based on Islamic morality—a vision which, particularly in the case of the Saudi state, could be disturbing to the sensitivities of many other secular and Islamic environmentalists alike. This notion, at least partly, also entered other documents (Naseef 1986, WFEIP 2000) and can be perhaps attributed to the wider Saudi influence (Schwencke, in this regard, speaks about a “consistent active Saudi influence on the Islamic environmentalist discourse,” which is not a complete exaggeration, even if it remained marginal in terms of the broader socio-political agenda of the kingdom; cf. 2012, 29).

In turn, the WWF and its subsidiary ARC progressively brought a different strategy into the institutional sphere. Its aim, already from 1986, was, rather than devising Islamic regulatory principles, to spread the *message* of Islamic environmentalism as a source of inspiration and vehicle of conversion to the “environmentalist” creed on a personal level across the world, that, instead of managing society from above, promised a kind of more spontaneous “ethical” social change (not completely different from what was envisioned by Nasr or Manzoor, but more practical and pragmatic in its orientation). The WWF also progressively accommodated its choice of speakers posing as representatives of

the tradition for this purpose. After 1986, it largely severed its cooperation with the Saudi-promoted conservative version of Islam (represented by WML) and chose instead as a main actor the British Fazlun Khalid, who represented the emerging civil-society-based activism (see 5.1.1) that WWF also intentionally strived to cultivate as one of its main aims. This corresponded with the civic and moderate (and in some sense effectively “secularized”) version of the discourse promoted by the organization. A similar shift from conservative and fundamentalist overtones has also been evidenced in the discourse of ISESCO between the Jeddah Declaration (WFEIP 2000) and the paper prepared for the Johannesburg summit (ISESCO 2002a). The civic and restrained articulation of the discourse for the purpose of international presentation (i.e., the preference of *values* over *laws*) was also characteristic of the *Teheran Declaration*. The apparent explanation for this preference can be found in the normative influence of the imagined “global community,” where the overt promotion of the Islamic identitarian agenda would be, with the most probability, regarded as unprofessional and unconstructive, hampering the very aim of presenting the positive “Islamic” contribution to the solution of environmental problems. In this way, the institutional activity also evidences the tendency of the discourse to *diversify* along the lines of different goals, audiences, and identities. This tendency to splinter and *deterritorialize* will be shown to be rather universal and will be analyzed shortly (see 5.2).

As it has been documented, institutional engagement has also followed distinct trajectories. If we look at the initiatives emerging from the Muslim countries (both the Saudi embrace of the discourse, the activity of ISESCO, and the activities of the Iranian government), we may notice that they eventually proved to be rather short-lived and not very intensive. In this sense, they can be perhaps best referred to as *experimenting* with framing the environmental agenda through religious terms. In contrast, the WWF and ARC were able to sustain a long-term activity that, despite perhaps not achieving most of its declared goals, influenced the emergence of the Islamic environmental activist movement and continues to be relevant through the UN Faith for Earth initiative, carrying the banner further on.

Finally, the institutions also influenced the very shape of the discourse in yet another way. As it has been shown, the *truth* of the Islamic posture towards the environment (defined earlier as its basic structural element; see 2.1.1.a) became a subject of sophisticated argumentation and polemic in the works of Nasr and Manzoor in what has been conceptualized as the “Islamic moral response” to the ecological crisis. The institutional discourse largely filtered out the element of polemic, and debate moved this truth towards what may be conceived of as *objectification*. Arguably, this can be ascribed to the specific rationality of the institutions, for which the “Islam and the environment” connection was meaningful mainly as a *resource* to be used in an *instrumental* manner to promote their particular stated goals, i.e., the environmental management, education, and legitimization of specific policies. To this end, the institutions also used specific textual forms or genres (like the lists of *principles*, *declarations*, and *plans*) and strategies of articulation, namely by structuring the discourse along particular practical areas and agendas, like *pollution*, *wastes*, *protection of species*, *industrial regulations*, and attaching it to specific general concepts like *sustainability*, often emerging as an outcome of the activity of expert bodies convened to this purpose. Arguably, the institutions thus contributed to the “sedimentation” of the discourse as well as specifically of its “catechism,” which was also widened to address a new set of themes and problems. Such objectification and instrumentalization of the discourse (i.e., identifying it with explicit “truth” instead of the truth searched for in the debate and polemic) may also easily conceal the initial motive of the *moral response* that has been identified and discussed above. It is, however, significant to realize that in spite of all these appropriations and adjustments, *morality* and moral concern still remained hidden in the institutional discourse as a central motive and effectively also the ultimate *resource* mobilized by the institutions in promoting their aims. This is because, as it can be easily ascertained, it was again the expectation of a *moral response*—i.e., by viewing the particular legislation or regulation as legitimate or by heeding the call to partake in the conservation activities and struggle for sustainability—that made the application of the discourse meaningful, and this is even though still other motives, mainly that of identity (see below), shall not be overlooked.

### 4.3.3 The Diversity of the Assemblage and the Hybridity of the „Religious“ and „Secular“

Apart from the practical impacts on the evolution and dissemination of the discourse, the analysis of the role of the institutions also provides us with valuable insights into the course of these processes on a more general level that can be valuable in terms of theoretical conclusions. For that, it is necessary to pose once again the question: what kind of institutions were these? What would intuitively come to mind in the case of dissemination of a particular *religious* discourse would be perhaps an imagery of concerned religious (i.e., Muslim) activists establishing such institutions and organizations and using them to promote their preferred agenda “from below.” Such a scenario is, though, far from reality and came up—tentatively—only later. In fact, the discourse was, as it has been shown, supported and developed predominantly through institutions with broader agendas—either environmental or Islamic. Moreover, the dominant role, especially in the initial phase, was paradoxically played by institutions that identified as secular.

Indeed, the IUCN, and especially the WWF and ARC, directed by non-Muslim actors and supported by still other non-Muslim actors like the World Bank, BBC, UNEP, or the members of the British royal family, significantly and in some regards singularly shaped and propped up the *Islamic* discourse on the environment. And apparently, the traits of “secularity” can be traced still further. It is, for example, hard to ignore that the Saudi MEPA, too, was an institution modeled on the „Western“ and „secular“ paradigm (in addition to being staffed by US-educated professionals and assisted by IUCN). Even without direct institutional links, it has been shown that the shape of the discourse and its content has been influenced indirectly by the tendency to *conform* to the particular shape of the global environmental agenda.

This can lead only to one conclusion, namely that the discourse, rather than being a product of purely “Islamic” agency, emerges from within and is co-shaped by a peculiar “hybrid” configuration—essentially an *assemblage* of the “Islamic” and “secular” actors and forces, occupying a border area between the “traditional” and local and the “modern” and global, wherein the Islamic identity

and normativity undergoes a specific *detrterritorialization* (see also 1.2.1) and combines with disparate factors and influences which mobilize religion to various different, and possibly non-religious ends. Arguably, this fact, which will be observed in yet other contexts, represents a significant insight into how peculiar Islamic identities and discourses are formed in the current era of globalization and should provide an important caveat in applying to the problem simplistic dichotomy of “religious” and “secular” (or “Islamic” and “Western,” for that matter) which, pitted against each other, also frequently figures in the discourse itself even if, in practice, it in many cases cannot be meaningfully defined. It is worth considering to what degree this observation, obtained specifically from the following of the genesis of the Islamic environmental discourse, is relevant also for other similar cases.

#### **4.3.4 A Question Scarcely Asked: The Impact**

Obviously, the mobilization of the Islamic environmental discourse in the institutional realm (and this ultimately holds also for other areas like the academic and activist one as well for the writings of Nasr and White) has been, to a large degree, based on the assumption of the „efficacy“ of religious beliefs in changing and shaping human ecology, or at least on the assertion of an interdependence between both. Such expectations have been shown to abound in the official statements, and we may again quote here the UN Assistant Secretary-General Olav Kjørven, lauding the attitude of faith communities representatives towards environmental politics as opposite to the usual „scarcity mentality“ („everyone generally wanting to do as little as possible, while pushing for others to do as much as possible“) of governments, and distinguished by an „abundance mentality,“ stating „this is what we can offer, this is what we are going to do“ (see Colwell 2009, 15–16). Nevertheless, leaving apart that the imaginary of abstract “faith communities” engaging in the matter independently of other institutions has been shown to be problematic, the claim of the “abundance” of religious resources to address the environmental problems may easily lead to overstatements and over-confidence in what can be offered and done. The eventual outcomes of the international ENGOs-sponsored initiatives, as well as the mobilization of “Islam



and the environment” on the part of governments, need to be viewed critically, too.

The discursive level can first evidence this. Arguably, the place where the discourse would be expected to be present the most are the Muslim countries (at least, such imaginary is implied in many statements, like in the Ohito declaration invoking the “popular” element by stating that “collectively, people of faith represent the most powerful voice in the world” [ARC 1995]). Despite that, it seems to be absent in many places where it would be expected to be found. While it is always methodologically difficult to prove the *absence* of something (and particularly of a discourse), the sheer fact that the question about the presence and impact of the Islamic discourse on the environment must be asked and investigated—and cannot be illustrated by unequivocal examples of such impact—speaks partly by itself. Still, the relative absence of the discourse can also be illustrated concretely, e.g., in the region of the Middle East.<sup>118</sup>

The wider presence of this discourse (particularly among the broader populace) in the region is hard to document. This is evident from the look into the specialized literature on environmental matters. A pioneering edited volume on *Environmental Politics in the Middle East* (see Verhoeven, ed. 2018; see also specifically the contribution of Sowers 2018) does not mention a connection to Islam at all. The same is the case in the later volume on *Environmental Challenges in the MENA Region* (Pouran and Hakimian 2019) or the recent volume by Deboulet and Mansour (2022). Moreover, the evidence about the existence of the discourse in the region is largely absent even from the works emerging from the „Islam and the environment“ academic subfield (as it has been discussed; see 1.1.1.b), even if the authors from this area should be highly motivated for providing it and in some cases tried to (cf. Foltz 2005a; Sayem 2018; Haq et al. 2020; see also Kaminski 2018). *Jadaliyya*, a leading critical publishing platform covering the politics in the Middle East through voices of local academicians, activists, and intellectuals, that, among other things, stresses the role of political economy in the debate about the Middle East and runs an independent and one of the best-informed pages on the environment, does not feature the topic of „Islam and environment“ even in one instance (see *Jadaliyya*, n.d.). A brief outlook on the

---

<sup>118</sup> Admittedly, I use this example among other things because it is an area of my expertise and the more general claim is inevitably open to contestation, which is welcome.

page's content shows that the Islamic framework is, at least explicitly, not considered among engaged and devoted scholars and activists focused on the environmental issues in the region. Finally, the same negative result is provided by Donatella Vincenti, a scholar who, based on the “Islam and environment” paradigm, undertook field research in the region only to observe that “Islamic environmental movements” in the form in which we know them from the Western diasporas (see 5.1.1) are missing (Vincenti 2017, 322–323). Overall, the discourse seems to be present mostly just in a restricted milieu among Islamic scholars (see 5.1.2) who have addressed the issue of the environment in some cases, but, regardless of the *discursive* importance of such undertakings (illustrating further the diversity of the possible responses), seems to be isolated, cut from the broader socio-political reality and bereft of tangible influence on society.

On the level of the state, the situation seems to be largely the same. Except for the *experiments* recounted above, local polities have more or less consistently upheld the secular and non-religious framework of their environmental-policy institutions, agencies, and law-making, essentially in the form in which they were established throughout the 1970s and 1980s, reproducing the institutions in the West, where the environmentalist turn originated. This secular outlook (also observed by Idllalène 2021, 16–26, 31–33) holds for the states with the most pronounced Islamic identities in the region, including Saudi Arabia, in which the environmental matters remain to be regulated by a statutory law issued by the King and further specified by the Council of Ministers (currently by the Royal Decree No M/165 of 2020; see Saudilegal n.d.; Bureau of Experts 2021). The situation is the same in Iran, where the statutory legal framework established already in the 1960s (Iran was one of the most progressive non-Western countries in adopting environmental legislation and regulation) has been essentially upheld also within the regime of the Islamic Republic and this is in spite of the new government’s eagerness to promote „Islamic“ norms in other areas, notably in penal law (see, e.g., Firouz and Balland 2011). After the ending of the short-lived experiment on the part of the ISESCO, the „Islamic“ rhetoric is also absent in the communications of the local states vis-à-vis the international community on environmental matters, where the “standard” secular language and framing of the agenda is used. Needless to say, in such a situation, it has little

merit to even think about the influence of “Islamic environmentalism” on the actual environmental indicators in this particular region (it may be useful to point out that both Iran and Saudi Arabia would not come out well from such an assessment), as there are virtually no channels through which such influence could occur.

Eventually, the situation in the Middle Eastern region can be best described as that even though the Islamic discourse on the environment has been present therein and available as an *option*, local actors, both at the elite and popular level, expressed no or little *interest* in adopting it as a framework for contending with and communicating the issues of the environment, and this is in contrast to some other cases, like Indonesia, Western Muslim diasporas, and even the international ENGOs. Arguably, this remarkable fact (occurring, to remember, in a region with a strong recent tradition of applying religious frameworks on various social problems and mobilizing them in politics) can be explained by considering yet another significant factor that, along the *moral* motivation and the imaginary of *efficacy* of religion in attaining the conservationist goals, seem to influence the proliferation and circulation of the Islamic environmental discourse: *identity*.

# 5 Echoing Cultures and Identities: Activists and Other Actors Adapting the Discourse

While in Chapter 3, I have focused on the moment of emergence of the Islamic environmental discourse and the early debate structured around the response to the notion of ecological crisis, in Chapter 4, I have shown how different interests and motivations incited institutional actors to incorporate religious language and motives into the conservationist agenda promoted by them. In this way, the previous chapter also provided the initial sense of how the discourse became more widely disseminated and popularized through the specific infrastructures of these institutions. In this chapter, I will follow this process further by focusing on a wider variety of actors who embraced the conviction about the specific relationship between Islam and environmental matters and began to promote it independently on the highly coordinated and centralized agency of major institutions. In some cases, these actors have made the Islamic environmental discourse a strong part of their personal identity and engaged in what may be viewed as an intense social activism and sustained social movement. In others, their relationship has been more tangential. Nevertheless, in both cases, this process of broader acceptance has arguably been key to what may be viewed as the *universalization* of the discourse and its transformation into a generic form of the widely shared “truth” about “Islam and the environment,” further specified in the content of the virtual catechism described earlier (see 2.2).

Nevertheless, while being important, this process has also been intricate. As will be discussed in detail, the adaptation of “Islamic environmentalism” across the Islamic assemblage, and especially its form, has been uneven. Even if the discourse can be traced to most geographic locations, appears in most languages,

and can be, in this sense, viewed as truly universal (cf. 2.1), there are, in reality, only a couple of places where its presence has become more pronounced and transformed into what can be conceived of as a logical outcome of the Islamic *moral response* to the ecological crisis: an attempt to incite a coordinated action to avert this crisis and make Islam an actual moral force in stirring the pro-environmental social change. Notably, this trend first and perhaps up till now most markedly occurred at the virtual periphery of the Muslim world, among the minority communities in particularly two Western countries, the United Kingdom and the United States. I will focus on this phenomenon that has already been discussed and comprises perhaps the most well-known case of the Islamic environmental discourse in the first section of the first part of this chapter (5.1.1). This will subsequently serve me to distinguish from this trend other actors' adaptations of the Islamic environmental discourse. In section 5.1.2, I will analyze the literary production of Arabic and other Middle Eastern (Egyptian, Palestinian, Libyan, Moroccan, Yemeni, Iranian, and others) authors and scholars on "Islam and the Environment," which occurred largely in the separation from the Anglophone discourse and has been scarcely reflected in academia—perhaps precisely because of the fact that it failed to stir a broader social movement or have other impact. In section 5.1.3, I will look at the limited adoption of the discourse by Islamists (or mostly just experimentation with it). Finally, in section 5.1.4, I will incorporate into the analysis yet another region where the Islamic environmental discourse seems to have gained traction and even transformed into a wider social movement, Indonesia, which thus needs to be viewed as a comparatively important case (and I will briefly discuss also the situation in other parts of the world). As in the previous cases, I will concentrate primarily on the historico-sociological analysis of how the discourse transformed or emerged in those specific places, as well as on the discursive specificities of each case. As such, the analysis in this part will further demonstrate the character of "Islamic environmentalism" in the first place as a heterogeneous and decentralized assemblage that may take different forms and enter a multiplicity of social configurations, merging with other and sometimes unexpected social, political, ideological and doctrinal agendas.

In the second part (5.2), drawing on this analysis and also on the content of the previous two chapters, I will further elaborate on this diversity. I will demonstrate, among other things, that the content of the Islamic “environmental message” substantively varies depending on the identity of speakers and social context and that the discourse itself must be viewed—except as a signifier of moral response and an instrument of a social change—as a means of expressing a particular identity. This will then be shown as a sociologically significant explanation that may, among other things, help to understand why it has been adopted by some actors and not others, as well as to assess its potential to play a socially transformative role in the future.

## 5.1 The Strands of Islamic Environmentalism

This part will attempt to localize particular identities tied to the circulation of the Islamic discourse on the environment as it has developed up to the present day. Each of the following four sections will serve primarily as a specific case study, illustrating how different actors perceive and interpret the relationship between Islam and environmental matters based on their other intellectual and doctrinal allegiances and in relation to particular cultural and social contexts. As such, they will show us Islamic environmentalism in its diversity and will further stress the fact, which has been already largely documented: that from the same general assumption about the congruence of Islamic morality with the environmental imperatives and the shared set of elements of the textual tradition, markedly different conclusions about the appropriate tenets of this morality and due course of action can be made.

In addition to discursive specificities, I will also, to some degree, focus on the social processes of emergence of the discourse in each specific case and on the actor networks and sometimes institutional structures that have underpinned it. These localized networks of actors will also be shown to have evolved in some cases from the institutionally sponsored activities investigated in the previous chapter (4.2; 4.3). As such, the analysis will further document the character of “Islamic environmentalism” as a global, decentralized assemblage of activists (the virtual global community of Muslim environmentalists), facilitating the transmission and exchange of ideas originating in the hybrid space of religious and secular. Nevertheless, in other instances, the “spontaneous” emergence of the discourse without such apparent links will be documented, too, complicating such single-origin genealogy and attesting instead to the hypothesis that the Islamic response to ecology may occur independently of such lineages. In any case, the adoption of the discourse by engaged individuals (or their failure to do so) and their willingness to spread it and enact it will be shown to be a key to its further development and its “authentic” existence as one of the veritable expressions of contemporary Islam.

### **5.1.1 The „Islamic Environmentalist“ Identity: Environmental Activism Among Muslim Communities in the West**

Islamic environmentalism among the Western (diasporic or convert) Muslim communities has been perhaps the most visible and well-documented in the academic literature (see Hancock 2018; see also Yazlina 2008; Chowdhury 2013). Whether this can be ascribed to the obvious potential bias ensuing from the position of the spectator is difficult to ascertain. Accounts from other parts of the world (with the exception of Indonesia) are missing, and this lacuna will be only partly compensated in the following sections. In any case, the Western strand of the discourse that evolved particularly in the UK and US is comparatively significant as it has reached the proportion of a veritable, even if rather small and scattered, social movement. I will first focus on the trajectory of development of the movement from the state of the discourse in the 1990s, providing subsequently some illustrations of its activities and initiatives. Finally, I will focus on its discursive specificities, which will be useful as material for comparison with the other strands of Islamic environmentalism.

#### *5.1.1.a Fazlun Khalid and the Birth of the First Islamic ENGO*

The name of Fazlun Khalid has already been mentioned in the previous section and not entirely by coincidence: over the past three decades, the effort to link Islam to conservationist concerns would probably hardly find (perhaps with the sole exception of S. H. Nasr) more devoted and persevering advocate (and this is even though from the late 1990s other names could be found). At the same time, Fazlun Khalid seems to be a founder of a new and, to a certain degree, novel pattern in the promotion of the discourse—one springing neither from the intellectual concerns of philosophers and spiritual reformers nor from the efforts of institutions to capitalize on religious sentiments and symbolism in the establishment of the agenda of sustainability, but emerging as a bottom-up movement.

Khalid’s personal profile may be instructive in illustrating the specificities of this “activist” engagement. Those who have been hitherto



identified as early commentators on the issue of “Islam and environment” were often men (as women had not yet joined the debate) of scholarly and academic affiliations and interests. Even if Nasr can be considered an activist, especially retrospectively, this is rather in a restricted sense (his main interest was in academia and in facilitating the broad discussion on Islam). Unlike Nasr, Sardar, or Manzoor, Khalid was not an established thinker or writer when he set out to engage in conservationist efforts, and he did not represent a broader intellectual project of his own. Born in 1932, he came to the UK from his native Sri Lanka in 1953, starting to work as a technician in the RAF and later in the private sector. It was only in the late 1980s that he became interested in environmental themes and their connection to Islam. According to his biography, his movement in this direction was gradual: During the 1960s, he became involved in trade union activities, which after some time led him to change his vocation and start to work as a social worker in migrant-related equality issues. This also turned his attention to the systemic global social problems connected to poverty, inequality, debt, and, eventually, environmental matters (IFEES n.d.h). Here, the roots of his turn towards environmental activism must also be seen. Yet how exactly this turn came about? Khalid’s own apparent account gives an answer. As the story goes, towards the end of the 1980s

he felt challenged at a meeting of environmentalists. Participants at this gathering were seeking common solutions to a problem seen as dwarfing all others in the whole of human history and he was asked what Islam had to say about the environment. He could not respond with a credible answer and he found the Muslim voice in this forum weak (see IFEES n.d.h).

Consequentially, according to his biography, Khalid, then in his late 50s, enrolled for a master’s degree in Islamic Studies at the University of Birmingham to discover and develop the potential of Islamic teachings on the environment “of which awareness appeared to be lacking amongst Muslims themselves” (IFEES n.d.h). The story, among other things, can clearly be seen as insightful into the state of the discourse on the verge of the 1990s: while the “Islamic view” of the environment has been already, at least in some form, in circulation from the late 1960s and received further impetus throughout the 1980s, Khalid’s account clearly shows that it had a little effect on a broader Muslim public, even in the UK where

the information about initiatives like the Assisi declarations could be expected to have a greater outreach. Khalid set himself to change this situation. Nonetheless, assuming that he was completely independent in his efforts would be wrong. Khalid's enthusiasm was apparently noticed by the emerging movement for the support of the religion-ecology intersection in the WWF, and cooperation was established between him and Palmer's network (which would later lead to the creation of ARC; see 4.2.2). Its first outcome was the 1992 volume *Islam and Ecology*, supported by the WWF and co-edited by Khalid and Joanne O'Brien (Khalid and O'Brien 1992). As it is related, Khalid "was able to draw contributors for this volume from the growing network of scholars and activists he was beginning to build" (IFEES n.d.h). This group of contributors comprised another six authors.

Some of them were not wholly new to the topic, which holds especially for Mawil Izzi Dien. Izzi Dien, an Iraqi-born Islamic scholar, was one of the authors of the 1983 Saudi/IUCN document *Islamic Principles* and served as an advisor to MEPA throughout the 1980s (Foltz 2008a). Unlike most of his co-authors from 1983, he remained engaged in the matter, publishing articles (see Izzi Dien 1984; 1990; 1997), one of the first English monographs on the topic (2000), and still other contributions later when he resettled to Western universities. Another author connected to the "Saudi circle" was Othman Llewellyn, an American-born convert (cf. Schwencke 2012, 15) and long-term employee of the Saudi wildlife protection authorities and also an early commentator on Islam-environment nexus (see 1982; 1983; 1984) who, equally as Izzi Dien, continued his activity further on.<sup>119</sup> At the same time, the volume included some newcomers. Except for Khalid himself, they included Al-Hafiz Bashir Masri, an Indian-born former Ahmadi convert to Sunni orthodoxy, and for some time an imam of the Shah Jehan Mosque in Woking (Masri 1989), who became known as a propagator of vegetarianism and in 1988 authored a book on *Animals in Islam* (Masri 1988; see also Tlili 2018, 6). Others were Ibrahim Umar Vadillo, a Basque convert to Islam, an author, and a critic of modern economic and monetary systems (later also a propagator of the use of the "traditional" golden minting; cf. Schwencke 2012, 46), Yassin Dutton, a British Muslim

<sup>119</sup> Among other things, in 2015, Llewellyn, together with Izzi Dien, took part in the preparation of the Islamic Declaration on Climate Change (IFEES 2015).

Academician equally as well interested in economic topics, criticizing the “usurious” nature of modern banking and trade exchange and Yunus Negus, bringing in the theme of Islamic science discussed in the previous section (his contribution to the debate on the environment seems to be transient).

The 1992 volume presented an important step in developing the discourse mainly by connecting perspectives that had been hitherto rather set apart. The theoretical and “legalist” inclinations of Izzi Dien and Llewellyn were juxtaposed with the more engaged and practical concerns put forth by Khalid, Vadillo, and Dutton, proposing a rather unconventional critique of economic institutions, calling for freeing markets of usurious practices and for more equitable sharing of natural resources (Vadillo and Khalid 1992; Dutton 1992), or for moral reform of broader extent (Khalid 1992), partly in the spirit of Nasr and Manzoor (see 3.2). This development of the discourse through new ideas and discussions may also be viewed as the main distinction of the activist discourse (partly overlapping also with the academic realm; see Chapter 6) from the more narrowly defined institutional one.

As for Khalid himself, his role did not remain limited to editorial and writing activity. Two years later, he established the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES). IFEES was registered as a charity in the UK in 1994 and is widely acknowledged as the first Islamic ENGO. Khalid established it to create a formal framework for further activities. The need for it, it is explained, stemmed from “the steadily increasing demands for advice and direction from students at one level and information from organizations ranging from NGOs to academia at another” (IFEES n.d.h).

Already in the 1990s, IFEES began to run its first international project in Zanzibar. The project focused on the local fishing community, some of whose members had used the destructive activity of “dynamiting” coral reefs in the island’s Misali Island Marine Conservation Area (MIMCA). IFEES was invited to intervene by an American organization, CARE International, because the previous attempts to educate the community on sustainable management of the area failed. Other supporting organizations were WWF and ARC. Three workshops were organized and attended by local community members, governmental officials, and representatives of the religious establishment (teachers in local madrasa and

members of the Mufti's Office). A teaching material produced by IFEES (see Khalid 1999) was used. The organizers of the initiative summarize its impacts as follows: „These workshops were a great success [...] the use of the Qur'an as a teaching resource has had the result of sensitizing stake holders to conservation issues in a matter of days compared with the poor results achieved over previous years using standard conservation approaches“ (Khalid and Thani n.d.). The education in faith-based environmental awareness was continued by another workshop two years later and further supported over the following years; it became one of the flagship projects of the IFEES (Khalid and Thani 2007, 7–12).

As it is clear from the circumstances of initiating the project, despite the status of the IFEES as an independent charity, its activity was closely related to and conditioned by the support of other organizations, namely the WWF. This also holds true for Khalid's whole early career. As mentioned, in 1995, the Sri Lankan-British activist chaired the session which produced the Ohito Declaration and led to the establishment of ARC (see 4.2.2.a). Over the following five years, Khalid worked as an ambassador for the alliance, traveling widely and establishing contacts among faith-inspired environmentalists (IFEES n.d.h). While the concrete (e.g., financial) extent of the cooperation between IFEES and ARC is unknown,<sup>120</sup> it is clear that this institutional support helped Khalid and his organization establish themselves at the forefront of the Islamic environmental discourse and activism. This symbiosis is, after all, not surprising as the IFEES projects like the one in Zanzibar represented an ideal outcome to which all the ARC's activity headed. The link would, though, not be indefinite. Throughout the 2000s, the close association between the “secular” ENGOs and IFEES diminished as the latter body stood on its own feet and could rely on the progressively growing community of Muslim enthusiasts and supporters. The signs of this “emancipation” can be evidenced already in the 1990s. In what follows, I will use yet another example to elucidate the transformation of the discourse towards this tendency.

---

<sup>120</sup> There is a lack of data on the IFEES or ARC websites; the theme is not addressed in the literature.

### 5.1.1.b *The UK Hub and the Independent Publishing Activity*

Fazlun Khalid was a British citizen, and his activities were based in the United Kingdom. This European country, which has one of the longest traditions of environmentalism and a comparatively sizeable Muslim community, seems to have also become the first “hub” of bottom-up Islamic activism focused on environmental matters. Above, I have already mentioned the 1992 volume edited by Khalid and O'Brien as the first collection devoted solely to the ecological themes by Muslim authors, which at least resembled an attempt to put together a group of “activists.” At the same time, the release of the book was sponsored and apparently also initiated by the WWF (the title was part of a broader series on religion and ecology issued by the organization). Some five years later, the proliferation of the discourse could be documented by the emergence of an ensuing rise of publishing activity, with one significant difference: the support of the “secular” ENGOs was not necessary anymore.

The first title that appeared was 1997 *Islam and the Environmental Crisis* by Akhtaruddin Ahmad, a Pakistani lawyer, a former member of parliament, a governmental official, and a prolific writer focusing on Islam-related popularization literature (Ahmad 1997). Next year, an edited volume, *Islam and the Environment*, akin to the 1992 Khalid and O'Brien's, appeared, edited by Harfiyah Abdel Haleem (see Abdel Haleem 1998a), an author and activist contributing to debates on various aspects of Islam and active in inter-faith dialogue and later a trustee of IFEES and one of the eminent personalities of the UK Muslim environmental movement (see IFEES n.d.f.; The Faraday Institute, n.d.). Both publications were issued by Ta-Ha Publishers, a leading independent London-based publishing house focused on Islamic literature. Finally, in 2000, *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam* by Izzi Dien was published by the Cambridge-based Lutterworth Press (Izzi Dien 2000). All three books can be—in the context of the English-speaking world—regarded significant as they finally put the Islamic discourse on the environment on a more firm footing. They demonstrated the growing interest in the topic and the capacity of authors to organize. They presented a source for subsequent debates and civic activities throughout the following two decades and remain highly regarded and frequently

quoted to date. Arguably, they also signify the emergence of a new kind of discourse that would subsequently characterize the “activist” stream within the broader volume of “Islam and the environment” literature.

A look into the second title, *Islam and the Environment*, by Abdel Haleem et al. (ed. 1998), may serve as a useful example. The volume comprises a 150-page book. After an introduction by Abdel Haleem, it opens with a reprint of Naseef’s 1986 *Declaration*, followed by a chapter by Fazlun Khalid on „Islam, Ecology and the World Order.“ Other Chapters are penned by Ismail Hobson, Gai Eaton, Yasin Dutton, and Ilyas Baker, as well as again by Hobson and Muhammad Abdel Haleem (the editor’s spouse and activist of his own). The closing chapter is by S. H. Nasr, devoted to „Sacred Science and the Environmental Crisis.“ As it is evident, the volume thus covers a relatively broad spectrum of views. While no chapters by Izzi Dien and Llewellyn are included, Naseef partly represents the more conservative and “legalist” approach (and by it, the authors also virtually acknowledge the continuity of the discourse and the symbolic value of the Assisi event). The presence of Khalid’s text confirms his central position in what has been called the “UK hub” of Islamic environmental activism. Finally, the chapter by Nasr further confirms the integrative aspiration of the collection by including him as one of the most persistent voices in the discourse, which could hardly be left out.

The rest of the chapters are penned by somewhat less renowned authors (at least in the context of the given discourse). Among them, Gai Eaton, a British diplomat, convert to Islam, and adherent to the Traditionalist school and Sufism, who was active at the same time as an independent Islamic scholar, writer, and acknowledged public commentator on the issues of Islam (see e.g. *The Telegraph* 2010; Backer 2010) represents a position close to Nasr’s “spiritual” reading of ecological crisis, lamenting the erosion of the traditional harmony of the Islamic religious practice and way of relating to the environment.<sup>121</sup> In turn, Yasin Dutton (a contributor to the 1992 Khalid and O’Brien’s and 2003 Foltz, Denny and Baharuddin’s volume; see Dutton 1992; 2003; see also 2022), a British Muslim academician notable for his input to the study of the early evolution of the *fiqh*,

---

<sup>121</sup> Eaton seems to be among the authors not particularly active in the „Muslim environmentalist“ movement, although there are some other contributions and public statements on the topic by him, particularly in the Traditionalist context (see e.g. Eaton 2006).

develops a different theme, already discussed above, and that is the critique of the prevailing economic paradigm and system. In Dutton's view, the main cause of the environmental problems comprises the normalized practice of usury (*ribā'*) on which the global economy is based. As a remedy, it is proposed that the practice of *zakāt* would be applied and, ideally, a genuinely Islamic political and economic system established consisting of "the political authority of an *amir* with a group who accept his leadership and who, together, can put these judgments [i.e., environmentally conducive Islamic economic and other norms] into practice" (Dutton 1998, 73).<sup>122</sup> In contrast to this socio-political utopia, Ilyas Baker from the Environmental Social Sciences Program of Mahidol University in Thailand, who in his other publications focused on various environmental topics ranging from communicating industrial hazards to the public to tourism management and planning, brings in a more grounded approach. He expounds key principles of scientific ecology (based mainly on the ecosystem services and environmental planning paradigms) to extrapolate from it an ideal "ecological attitude" (Baker 1998, 77–79). The question of whether Islam is congruent with such an attitude is answered affirmatively, drawing on several Qur'anic concepts and their explications.<sup>123</sup> Ismail Hobson, another British scholar, translator, and convert (also tied to Traditionalist school), surveys in his chapter historical examples of what may be identified with „environmental engineering“ albeit of a sustainable variety in mainly medieval artifacts like *qānāts*, urban centers of medieval cities, natural cooling systems as well as historically documented practice in the domains of agriculture, medicine and energy utilization, with a conclusion, that the solution of the environmental crisis must draw on these experiences and lead to a simpler lifestyle (Hobson 1998). Finally, Muhammad Abdel Haleem focuses his chapter on the theme of water, drawing on extensive quotations from the Qur'an and hadith to expose the importance of the resource from various viewpoints as one of

---

<sup>122</sup> Dutton develops the same theme (represented already before [1992]) also in his following contributions to the environmental discourse, albeit with slightly modified conclusions (see Dutton 2003; 2022). Notably, in the 2003 volume, the demand for Islamic polity is not included, only the demand for the re-establishment of the golden standard (Dutton 2003, 336–337). Finally, Dutton promotes his thesis about the harmfulness and inadmissibility of the *ribā'* system also outside of the Islamic-environmental context (see, e.g., Dutton 2011) and can be thus considered an advocate in this specific area.

<sup>123</sup> Baker is among the authors who did not contribute to the topic in what follows (except for writing a review of *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam* [Baker 2003]).

God's main blessings and signs (Abdel Haleem, M., 1998). What do all these texts have in common, and what links them together?

In the first place, it is necessary to stress what has been already said: that the volume brings together a *plurality* of perspectives. At the same time, this plurality is more of complementarity than of difference and argument. Even though disparate and, to a certain degree, even opposing attitudes are included (for example, Dutton's politicizing, if not "Islamist" proposal of creation of an integrated Islamic social system on the one hand, and Eaton's vision of the ascetic personal morality on the other; cf. Dutton 1998; Eaton 1998), no serious debate of their mutual congruity is included—they are merely juxtaposed as a part of the shared answer to the common question.

The basic commonality of all the texts is that they derive their arguments from the shared pool of concepts, tropes, and similes grounded in the Qur'anic text and the broader Islamic tradition—one which we have already followed in its gradual emergence in different contexts throughout the whole work and which together comprise the *catechism* of the discourse, based on belief in the comprehensiveness of the Islamic response to the ecological challenge. The authors employ the familiar concepts of *khilāfa* (guardianship), *āyāt* ([God's] signs), *mīzān* (balance), *fasād* (corruption), the invocation of the injunctions of shari'a (in areas like land distribution and ownership, or slaughter, but also in general principles like *maṣlaḥa*). In fortification of the sense of the uniqueness and universality of the Islamic religious and cultural message, they also add the historical examples of the "Islamic" practice of the past, inferring from them concrete tenets to be actualized here and now in areas of education, scientific practice, legislation, parameters of economic system, governance, technology application, and individual lifestyle. Indeed—the 1998 *Islam and the Environment* volume can be, in this respect, regarded as an important step towards integrating the Islamic environmental discourse that now poses as a self-confident program of reform. Pointing to another significant development, these concepts and tenets are no longer *theorized about* as a *potential* resource for environmental ethics or law-making, but they are presented as *self-evident* and *directly relevant*. In the completion of the *catechism*, the array of motives is identified with the tradition itself, presented as the essential "Islamic view of the environment," exempted



from any sense of tentativeness as well as from further substantial debate. Arguably, this notion also enables the discourse to work as a viable and self-sustained source of identity, as it will be discussed.

Finally, what is further specific for the activist discourse (which is not to be solely credited for the sedimentation of this *catechism*; an equally as important role was played by the academic discourse, which is also partly related to the activist one as it will be explained in the next section) is the form of presentation and the overall framing. The activist discourse is based on a *passionate* exposition of these motives and a *personal appeal* to the addressees to embrace them and recast them into practical adjustments and actions, being framed as dictated by piety and morality. Above, I have already used the examples of this discourse to illustrate the moral dimension of the discourse (4.3.2). To repeat the passage, drawing on the above-discussed concepts, Abdel Haleem concludes in her introduction:

So each one of us has a responsibility to use what little power we have to make things better, not worse. We should try to live economically, grow some of our own food, use electricity and petrol sparingly, walk and cycle and use public transport where possible and share whatever we have with others who are not so well off (Abdel Haleem 1998a, 9).

In other instances, the direct juxtaposition of the Qur'anic concepts and motives with concrete problems (like the wasteful consumption with *ribā'* [Dutton 1998, 73] or destroying of nature with disturbing God-worshipping creatures and breaching the Trust [Eaton 1998, 52]) is used to render ecological harm comparable to more "ordinary" sins and deplorable in their concreteness. At several points, this connection more or less often passes into a preachy and castigating tone, exhorting addressees to disavow and actively oppose what is viewed as sinful and morally bankrupt practice. Another already quoted passage from the Abdel Haleem's introduction exemplifies this attitude:

The Qur'an condemns those who heap up wealth, believing it will make them live forever; those who appear to be pious, yet do not help orphans or feed the needy [...] unaware and heedless of the damage they are doing in their quest for wealth. These are the men who cut down huge forests of majestic trees to provide hardwood for office furniture, window-frames, even paper, and pay no attention to restocking the forest; men who fish vast quantities from the sea, heedless of the fact that they are not allowing the ocean's life to replenish itself; men who oppress people and keep them poor, who

force them from their lands, leaving them without any livelihood, and then employ them for low wages on their own land to grow crops for the market to make their employers rich; those who even kill and maim people in order to profit from the land they have stolen. These are the people who cause direct damage to the environment (Abdel Haleem 1998a, 8).

To be sure, the activist discourse does not need to use this admonishing tone and embrace elements of a relatively radical anti-capitalist stance, as the 1998 volume does. In fact, this overtly moralist tone would tend to recede within the activist community over its following evolution. What would remain is the *motivational*, personally appealing discourse that can also be viewed as the definitional disposition of the activist discourse. Its possible alterations, taking a less radical stance and gradually approaching the more or less standard form of civic activism, encouraging gradual positive change by little-by-little adjustments in one's personal lifestyle, can be illustrated by examples from a more recent period.

#### *5.1.1.c The Proliferation and Popularization of the Discourse and the Emergence of the Generic Islamic Environmental Activism in the West*

As already mentioned in the introduction, seeking information about the “Islamic opinion” on environmental matters, one would now, in the internet age, hardly end up with a shortage of sources and answers. For a useful illustration, we may give a say to the latest technological reproduction of common sense, the “artificial intelligence” of a language model created by the aggregation of disposable digitalized textual sources:

However, it is worth noting that Islam places a significant emphasis on environmental conservation and sustainability. The Qur'an and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encourage Muslims to protect the environment and be stewards of the earth. Muslims are also taught to avoid waste, use resources responsibly, and show compassion towards all living beings.<sup>124</sup>

---

<sup>124</sup> The text was generated by Chat GPT-3.5 language model by OpenAI company in March 2023 as a part of an answer to the prompting question „Are Muslims more active in environmental conservation than the followers of other faiths or atheists?“ Notably, the model did not give an unequivocal answer to the question, but provided, as it may be evidenced, a largely determinate *interpretation* of the Islamic normative position.

Arguably, the existence of this virtually consensual view (one cannot get a different answer unless actively searching for it and even then cannot get it easily) must be viewed as a consequence of the universalization of the Islamic discourse on the environment in large part due to the proliferation of activism in Western countries. In contrast to other layers of the discourse, this kind of activism also gradually became a subject of critical scholarly inquiry (see especially Hancock 2018; see also Chowdhury 2013; Yazlina 2008). In what follows, I will not attempt to provide an exhaustive mapping of this trend, which would require an extensive space. Instead, I will focus on a diverse selection of examples (covering especially the UK and the US) and stress discursive specificities.

Beginning in the UK, a European country with a long tradition of the presence of the Muslim community and intercultural relations that has also been identified as the early center of the emergence of the whole phenomena, we may observe there two particular trends: the continuing relevance of the IFEES and the adoption of the agenda by other Muslim organizations and associations. As for the IFEES, its activity can be split into two parts. The first one comprises its public presence and advocacy in environmental matters by issuing publications and posing as a Muslim voice in the debate. The second is its participation in on-the-ground projects, often in cooperation with other associations and bodies.

The public activity of the IFEES has been signified by the publication of educational and popularization materials. Among examples, “Qur’an, Creation and Conservation” (Khalid 1999) *Teachers Guide Book for Islamic Environmental Education* (Khalid and Thani 2007), and the *Muslim Green Guide to Reducing Climate Change* (LifeMakers UK and IFEES 2008) may be mentioned. All three publications would be subsequently disseminated for free and would serve as standard materials in projects run by the IFEES in the UK and abroad.<sup>125</sup> All of them also illustrate well the overall approach promoted by Khalid as the method of organization’s activity. This, in contrast to invoking a broader moral or socio-cultural debate on the relationship between faith and environment (as it is still visible in Abdel Haleem’s edited 1998 volume) and in partial accord with the tendency evidenced in the institutional discourse (see 4.b), focuses on

---

<sup>125</sup> To this end, the *Qur’an, Creation and Conservation* was translated into Indonesian and *Teachers Guide Book* into Swahili (IFEES n.d.g)

*catechization* in what (not least due to the activity of Khalid himself) at this point becomes a relatively “standardized” pool of concepts and textual references (see 2.2). Its aim is to build individual conscience and incite change in one’s individual practice and lifestyle.

Already, the austere 1999 brochure thus combines information on harmful practices (like burning of forests, erosion, pollution of air, or whaling) and Qur’anic quotations that warn off sowing corruption (*fasād*) on earth or disturbing the ecosystemic balance (*mīzān*) and harming communities (*umam*) of animals (Khalid 1999). The following publications evidence a gradual evolution towards professionalization and accommodation of the mainstream public relations communication of the environmental agenda. A paragon example is the *Muslim Green Guide*, issued ten years later, which presents a colorful booklet free of dense textual content and structured along simple three-line or half-dozen-bullet paragraphs headed by questions “What is the issue?” or “How can my family help?” with the final self-evaluation check-list establishing “how green is my family?” The flexibility in the interpretation of the textual tradition can be illustrated by the actualization of the Qur’anic passage recalling that God created “horses, mules, and donkeys for you to ride and use for show, and other things you know nothing about” (16:8) to promote cycling (LifeMakers UK and IFEES 2008).

The second component of this public-oriented activity then consists of public pronouncements, most often by Fazlun Khalid himself, related to various occasions. As such, these may have simply stipulated the Islamic moral position towards the matter on multiple forums and in the media (see, e.g., Khalid 2007) or comment on the actualities, particularly about the global climatic agenda towards the focus on which the IFEES (in concord with the broader trend) progressively drifted after the turn of the millennium. An example of such activity may be the reaction to the US pull-out from the so-called Paris Agreement of 2015 by the Trump administration in 2017 (IFEES 2017).

It is in this category that we may also include the issuing of the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change in 2015 (IFEES 2015), in which the IFEES was apparently a leading actor. Issued in August 2015, a little more than three months before the start of the UN COP 21 in Paris and in the wake of the

lauded Pope Francis's encyclic *Laudato Si'* (2015), the declaration came out as perhaps the hitherto the most successful initiative which arose from the activities of the Islamic environmental movement. The Declaration has been medialized in global news outlets (see, e.g., Nelsen 2015; McKibben 2015; Dizard 2015) and received praise from several directions. Up till now, it has been widely quoted and generally hailed as a turning point in the progress and proliferation of Islamic environmentalism (see, e.g., Idllalène 2021, 6; Vincenti 2018, 67–68; Kaminski 2018, 180–181). The document is certainly noteworthy for a number of reasons.

Among the most important ones is its timely release and coherent intention to speak to a concrete problem, and that is the requirement to reach a new global agreement on climate at the Paris Summit that the declaration endorses (see art. 1.8.). Also the rest of the declaration relates to this demand and the necessity to reverse the climatically destructive trajectory of the global community. As such, it represents a well-structured and balanced combination of the Islamic cosmological and moral assertions (a succinct but extensive version of *catechism*, staging the most frequently embraced Qur'anic concepts and hadiths), an appeal to the scientific and environmentalist consensus on the problem (see art. 1.4; 1.5), and realistically formulated demands targeted at specific actors ranging from the COP as such, to „well-off nations and oil-producing states“ (art. 3.2), corporate sector, humanity as a whole and Muslims specifically (art. 3.4–3.6). The core of these demands consists of following the scientific consensus in the area of mitigation and also environmental justice in assisting the poorer communities and nations (art. 3.2).

Significantly, the declaration is free of any apparent apologetic overtone. Instead, it is imbued by the spirit of cooperation and solidarity, with the main underlying ethical principle being that of *responsibility*, one concerning the whole of humanity (art. 2.6) but also Muslims specifically, in an implicit acknowledgment that the road towards social change does not lead via Islamic scriptures, but real people and adherents of the faith, implicated in harmful activities as anyone else (2.8.; 3.6; see also the art. 3.2. that by mentioning oil-producing states targets significant Muslim governmental actors). In a further assertion of the plurality of beliefs and identities, the authors exhort the addressees to „join us in collaboration, co-operation, and friendly competition in this

endeavour [...] as we can all be winners in this race,” referring to the Qur’anic verse 5:48 inciting competition in doing good (art. 3.5). Together with the skillful composition and wording, this ecumenic, tolerant and constructive framing must be seen as an important circumstance of the document’s success and reverberation, not least among the broader Western public but also among the community of Muslim environmentalists themselves.

In contrast to most of the outputs of the institutions investigated above (see Chapter 4), the declaration thus achieved something for which other above-mentioned IFEES activities can be credited—creating a semblance of speaking *on behalf* of Islam and representing it as a community and faith. It must be seen as noteworthy that this semblance of representativeness was not achieved by any of the outputs originating in the context of Muslim-majority countries. Lastly, the document also—and this must be seen as another element conducive to its overall quality and success—represents an important illustration of networking activity. Finished in cooperation with Islamic Relief Worldwide<sup>126</sup> during a symposium that took place in Istanbul between 17th and 18th August 2015, its preparatory team included well-known names from the Muslim-environmentalist scene: Fazlun Khalid, İbrahim Özdemir, Azizan Baharuddin from Malaysia, Osman bin Bakar from Brunei, Fachruddin Mangunjaya from Indonesia, Abdelmajid Tribak from Morocco, and Othman Llewellyn from Saudi Arabia (see IFEES n.d.b.). The IFEES has maintained its engagement in this area, as may be evidenced in the statement initiated by the organization, addressing COP 26 in Glasgow and involving endorsement by six other organizations, including the Muslim councils of the three UK countries and Ireland (IFEES 2017).

The practice of cooperation also marks the second area of IFEES activities—the on-the-ground educational and direct-action projects. Among these are a series of training sessions in the UK, Indonesia, Madagascar, Zanzibar, Tanzania, and Nigeria carried out in cooperation with organizations like the British Council, WWF, ARC, and a number of Muslim charities (IFEES N.d.e). Added to this may be the engagement in the Green mosque projects and plastic-free *iftār* initiatives in cooperation with still other actors (*ibid.*; see also below).

---

<sup>126</sup> On the climate agenda of the organization see IRW n.d.

This all may be ascribed to the relentless activity of the founder of the foundation, Fazlun Khalid.<sup>127</sup>

As already mentioned, the IFEES did not stay alone in its activism. From the mid-aughts, it was joined by other Islamic NGOs, embracing and developing a similar agenda. Except for Islamic Relief Worldwide, which adopted sustained environmental activism exceeding its participation in the declaration on climate change (see IRW n.d.), a convenient example may be the Bahu Trust, founded in 1983 as a registered charity in the UK with a seat in Birmingham. The organization derives its name from 17th century Indian Sufi saint Sultan Bahu and is active primarily in the fields of Islamic mission and education, running, among other things, classes of the Qur'an memorizing and reciting, training of Imams, operating about 20 Islamic centers and mosques and engaging in various community and charity projects (see Bahu Trust n.d.a). It presents itself as moderate and tolerant. The environmental agenda figures in its portfolio approximately from the last decade.

This includes converting mosques and buildings operated by the Trust to renewable energy, providing education and consultancy on the matter (directed, among others, to imams in local mosques), and organizing public campaigns and community clean-ups, often in collaboration with other confessional and non-confessional organizations. The organization is accredited with UNEP as an observer and apparently closely cooperates with the pioneering IFEES (Bahu Trust n.d.b). Its Website features a number of resource documents, some of which are adapted from the outside (like the Islamic Declaration on Climate Change), while others are issued by the organization itself. Among these are a series of brochure-sized „Muslim's guides“ of the kind already discussed before (cf. LifeMakers UK and IFEES 2008), related to various areas of lifestyle, providing advice on how to adjust it to minimize impact on climate (which, as a central ecological issue, also frames the environmental agenda of the organization more generally); these include food, transport, energy, the climate change in general and also a “Guide to an Eco Conscious Ramadan.” The brochures, about eight pages long and created in a visually attractive manner with illustrations (which feature as its main motive solar plants and wind turbines apparently symbolizing the

---

<sup>127</sup> It is worth mentioning that Khalid in 2019 authored another book devoted specifically to the problem of climate change (Khalid 2019).

transition towards a sustainable future), mix together basic scientific and technical facts with the „environmental verses“ of the Qur’an and sunna to derive from them practical tips for adjustments in one’s household and of everyday routines. Apparently, the focus of these materials is predominantly on individual consumption. Nevertheless, each of them also features at the end a call to join the climatic advocacy and activism, e.g., via social networks, joining local activist groups, or MP lobbying. They are authored by Kamran Shezad, a sustainability consultant and activist associated with both the Bahu Trust and the IFEES. Their release was supported by other associations like Religions for Peace, Faith for Climate, Muslim Council of Britain, IFEES, and Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board. Overall, the discourse is optimistic, engaged, and imbued with a strong sense of cooperation and belonging to a unified climatic movement (Shezad n.d.; see also other materials at Bahu Trust n.d.b). Comprising a tangible outcome of these joint efforts, the Cambridge Central Mosque project, which resulted in the designing and construction of architecturally valuable, aesthetically attractive premises based on the tenets of sustainability, may be mentioned (CCM, n.d.).

To illustrate other, differently oriented forms of activism, the case of the Institute of Ismaili Studies-affiliated Reza Shah-Kazemi can be mentioned in the UK context.<sup>128</sup> Shah-Kazemi is closely associated with the Traditionalist movement represented in Britain by Martin Lings, LeGai Eaton, and others. After publishing on general topics like tolerance and spirituality in Islam, participating in the already mentioned Jordanian booklet (Bin Muhammad, Shah-Kazemi and Ahmed 2010, 42–43), and commenting on Nasr’s perspective on religious crisis (see Shah-Kazemi 2017), he launched the Green Knight Multimedia platform in 2020, focused on spreading the wisdom of Perennial Philosophy via the internet (see GKM n.d.). As a part of this endeavor, he also issued a short book, *Seeing God Everywhere: Qur’anic Perspectives on the Sanctity of Virgin Nature*, in 2021 (Shah-Kazemi 2021). This work works with a familiar cluster of themes introduced already by Nasr ([1968] 1990). Starting with the overreaching principle of *tawhīd*, it recounts the *catechism* of Islamic environmental discourse. At the same time, it enriches it with new, intellectually sophisticated lines of interpretation and

---

<sup>128</sup> The connection between Ismaili tradition and Islam-environment nexus will be again mentioned in discussing the 1998 Yale University project (see 6.1.2).



argument, drawing from, among other things, the ascetic motives preserved in the prophetic tradition. All this, at the same time, points toward an already well-known proposition, namely that the secular ethics of the environment is impoverished and reduced in comparison with the integral religious (Islamic) view of reality and that „the environmental crisis could not have happened in a world fashioned by the Islamic conception of *tawhīd*“ (Shah-Kazemi 2021, 2) and cannot be rectified without significant spiritual change. The booklet has been actively promoted, e.g., by the Central Cambridge Mosque. Shah-Kazemi is also an active educator and public speaker promoting his conception, e.g., at the Shi‘a-affiliated Islamic College in London (see IC n.d.). This example also shows us that activism can take various forms. Instead of „everyday discipline“ of lifestyle adjustments, it has also preserved the more radical „spiritual-revolutionary“ notion established by Nasr. Another insight into this versatility may provide the participation of Muslim activists in the Extinction Rebellion protests under the banner of their religious identity, as documented by Skrimshire (2019; see also Rahman 2019).

#### *5.1.1.d Ibrahim Abdul-Matin and the (Almost) Secularized Version of Islamic Environmentalism*

While the UK may be viewed as its first center, after 2000, the trend of Islamic environmental activism apparently proliferated further. Arguably, its second most important center became the US (where also the academic discourse on Islam and the environment became institutionalized around the verge of the millennium; see Chapter 6). Judging by publication activity, the occurrence of bottom-up activism lagged approximately one decade behind the UK but has developed quickly since and brought up also some new trends.

The book by Ibrahim Abdul-Matin *Green Deen: What Islam Teaches about Protecting the Planet* (Abdul-Matin 2010) may be regarded as a significant publication, marking the ascent of the movement and simultaneously chronicling some already functional initiatives.<sup>129</sup> Written by a self-styled Muslim environmentalist, coming from a family of converts and working in a non-governmental sector focused on environmental conservation (Abdul-Matin 2010, 129 I have extensively dealt with this work in my thesis (Kolářček 2018, 95–111).

230–232), it can also be regarded as discursively significant, representing the trend identifiable already in the later stages of the activist discourse in the UK: the effective merger of the Islamic environmental discourse with the generic environmentalist agenda and its expression in civic manner, free of any stress on cultural or normative superiority.

Abdul-Matin goes further in this approach than most other authors. In the beginning, we may find a declaration of a fully liberal outlook in his statement that „Islam [...] is, like all things, a choice“ (2010, 3). At the same time, the role of Islam is viewed by the author as complementary to the more general environmentalist endeavor, as the book seeks to transmit „what Islam says and what Muslims are doing and can do to be part of the larger environmental movement“ (4). Added to that may be the strong inclusivist notion as evident from another statement: „Harnessing this passion with the passion of those who are drawn to the environmental movement for other reasons makes the overall movement to protect the planet, animals, people, and plants a stronger movement that represents the diversity of the planet“ (ibid.; see also 16–17). And finally, there is a declaration of laicism as Abdul-Matin rejects that advancement of his peculiar version of Islamic environmentalism would „depend on the loudmouthing of any one priest or imam“ (17) and admits that he does not possess scholarly credentials or theological training, grounding his conviction by his upbringing and personal relation to God (xxi, xxvi).<sup>130</sup>

This approach results further in what may be conceptualized as a *hybridity* of many of the author’s concepts. This already concerns the defining concept of the Green Deen itself, which is used in the title. Abdul-Matin defines it as „living and practicing Islam while also honoring the environmental ethos of Islam“ (2010, xix). As one may notice, the concept harbors at least two ambiguities in itself. First, Abdul-Matin virtually defines *Green Deen* as a specific (one could say „doctrinal“) position within Islam, identifiable by adherence to the environmentalist tenets. Consequentially, the (in most other cases vigorously stipulated) unity of the faith is split apart: adherence to Islam does not *automatically* establish sound practice—this also requires adherence to its specific

---

<sup>130</sup> Abdul-Matin also qualifies the interpretation of the textual tradition proposed by him as „my personal feelings about particular ayas and hadith to clarify a problem or to support a particular solution“ (2010, xviii).

ecologically informed *ethos*. Second, the American activist furnishes his main concept itself with inclusivist overtones that are well apparent from the use of the term *deen* (Ar. *dīn*), meaning „religion“—instead of mere Islam (as it would go with „Green Islam“).

Consequentially, Abdul-Matin, on the one hand, speaks from the position of Islam and employs Islamic concepts, but at the same time, evinces that the *Green Deen* possesses its universal meaning. Followers of other faiths and world views can share the environmental ethos of the Green Deen. Apparently, this is rooted already in the author’s approach to religious identity, whereby he states that „Islam is a *Deen* [that] recognizes the existence and the legitimacy of other spiritual paths and teaches mutual understanding, respect, and focus on similarities as a means to bring people together, not push them apart“ (2010, xvii), but also expressed more directly in the statement that “Islamic teachings proposed in his book can be useful to *all people* [i.e., not just Muslims] who are concerned about protecting the planet” (3; see 2). In contrast, the „deen“ of Muslims themselves, as already indicated, need not be necessarily „green,“ if the environmentalist ethos is ignored, implied by the question „how green is your deen?“ (xxvi).

Leaning towards the liberal approach to faith and eclecticism may also be evidenced in Abdul-Matin’s treatment of religious concepts. Characteristically, it appears especially in the author’s central postulate, in the very first sentence of his text: “The Earth is a mosque, and everything in it is sacred” (2010, 1). Abdul-Matin explains this tenet as the core of his personal conviction, returning to his experience during a trip into the mountains with his father, who quoted at this occasion hadith recorded by Muslim, “Wherever you may be at the time of prayer, you may pray, for it (the Earth) is all a mosque” (2). Remarkably, the tenet must be seen as specific since it is only partially derivable from the textual tradition—the opinion that the Earth is “sacred” (or that “Islam teaches a deep love of the planet,” *ibid.*, 2) surpasses the usual interpretation of man-nature relationship present within the discourse,<sup>131</sup> and at the same time strongly inspires the overall outlook proposed by Abdul-Matin in his book. It is only in light of it that other textual-tradition-derived tenets can be adequately interpreted. These are based on

---

<sup>131</sup> Its closest analog may be found in Nasr’s claim about the sacredness of nature ([1968] 1990, 21).

the already familiar generic concepts of *tawhīd*, *āyāt*, *khilāfa*, *amāna*, *‘adl* and *mīzān*. Abdul-Matin succinctly explains them as general concepts in the introduction to the book and then uses them liberally throughout the rest of the text—together, they comprise a basic ethical framework, with the first two signifying the “sacred” quality of the various elements of the environment, and the latter four relating to the right course of one’s conduct and action.

When asking about the main specificity of the author’s usage of the Qur’anic terminology, we may best address it through the overall intention of the publication, which is characteristically *practical*. The book is devoid of intricacies of exegesis or extensive debate about the meaning of the employed concepts but instead focuses on what can be done directly by the individual—a question examined by the author by structuring his book around four main topics of “waste,” “watts,” “water,” and “food” as the areas where such individual action can be directed.

Significantly, what is to be done in any of these areas has ultimately little to do with Islam and concepts like *khilāfa* or *mīzān*. Unlike many other authors, Abdul-Matin does not treat (or pretend to do so) them as normatively determinate. As it is implicitly held throughout the book, the correct action prescribed by these concepts is eventually one that contributes to the amelioration of the environmental problems and, thus, to the preservation of the “sacredness” of the Earth. Moreover, such an adequate action and practice is nothing that would need to be invented anew. It is determined by science, with which Abdul-Matin declares full conformity, stating that “through science, we come to know more about creation and how to best take care of it” (2010, 4). Included in that is the acknowledgment that the information about environmental harm comes from science, too (*ibid.*). Remarkably, along with science, Abdul-Matin also asserts the value of *environmentalism* as a normative resource of its own, qualifying it as an independent movement harboring unique values and visions. Environmentalism is, in his interpretation, distinct from other major social and political ideologies (namely Marxism and capitalism) and surpasses them in embracing more universalist and humane aims, rendering man, not a mere “cog in a capitalist or socialist machine” but defining him through his “responsibility to the people, the plants, the animals, the air, the water, and the land” (36; see also 35).

As it may be viewed, Abdul-Matin, in this way, effectively abandons the imaginary of Islamic specificity and exclusivity in addressing environmental problems: a *Green Deen*, even if it may be (but need not be) expressed in Islamic terms, is *synonymous* with environmentalism and its diverse agendas from legal regulation that “protects the planet” (Abdul-Matin 2010, 40–42) to a green economy that establishes *mizan* between human needs and the environment (43–45) and environmental justice (*adl*) that connects the concern for the environment to the struggle for social equity (42–43). Accordingly, Rachel Carson, S. H. Nasr, and Theodore Roosevelt are considered by Abdul-Matin (together with him himself and other environmentalists, Muslim or not) as members of one movement. This is, again, indicated by the generic use of the Qur’anic terms as simply signifying good practice, regardless of one’s personal identity—apparent in quotations like “[Theodore] Roosevelt realized the injustice that occurs when people are wasteful, and his words echo balance (*mizan*) and justice (*adl*), two of the six basic Islamic principles necessary to follow in living a Green Deen” (40) or in author’s praise of Winona LaDuke, an American environmental activist of Indigenous origin and former presidential candidate for the Green Party who “is not a Muslim but a person who sees the value of bringing faith-based communities into the environmental movement, and she is a human being who embodies the spirit of the Green Deen principle of being a steward of the Earth [and] spent a lifetime working to connect people to the core (universal) spiritual principles of Oneness (*tawhid*), stewardship (*khalifah*), and the covenant humans have with God to protect the planet (*amana*)” (95–96).

In this way, it can be said that Abdul-Matin largely *secularizes* the Islamic response to the ecological crisis and transforms it into the utilitarian ethics of personal responsibility. The remedy to the environmental problems does not comprise of “spiritual” reformation of society (as held by Nasr, but also by White and many other authors), nor by subjecting social, economic, scientific or other practice to a specific normativity derived from Islam (as held by authors who propose institution of *zakāt*, prohibition of *ribā*’, or application of Islamic ethical or legal injunctions of any kind), and even not by acceptance of particular teaching or doctrine per se. It is done step by step in individual deeds and decisions in one’s everyday life. This concords with the ultimate focus on practice

in Abdul-Matin's book. A "green Muslim" should limit his consumption but also plan his career to partake in environmentally-friendly industries (such as renewable energy; cf. Abdul-Matin 2010, 93–94), give his support to "green" politicians (39–42), and associate with other environmental activists in the campaigns against fossil fuel extraction and against corporations harming the environment (81, 86–88). Still, Abdul-Matin's demands do not stop even here. It is, ultimately, also Islam itself, and its institutions and ritual practice, that should be adjusted by environmental tenets. This may concern mosques that should be rebuilt into "green mosques" so that their ecological footprint would be minimized (57–58; a concern which we also saw in the UK Muslim environmentalist movement; see the previous section)<sup>132</sup> but also, for example, reduction of water consumption during ablution (136–138) and widening of the criteria incumbent for the production of halal food, so as they would correspond to environmental and animal-welfare standards (the concept of "green dhabiha" [171–178]).

As few of these practical injunctions are derived from the Islamic textual tradition or the religious norm, it must be concluded that Abdul-Matin's approach effectively diverts from what has been identified above (see 3.1.2.c) as a paradigmatic assumption strongly present in the whole discourse and informing especially (but not least) its incipient phase, namely that "What people do about their ecology [...] is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny, that is, by religion" (White 1967, 1205). This is to the point that the statement may be rephrased into its partial reversal, i.e., *what people do about their religion*—and here is specifically meant what they consider as morally right and admissible practice as adherents of the given faith—*is conditioned by their understanding of the practical impacts of their action, that is*—as far as the specific area of ecology is concerned—*by their adoption of the environmental perspective*. With its overwhelming focus on mediating such understanding and inciting the adoption of the environmentalist outlook (treated as universal and normatively independent), Abdul-Matin's book can be regarded as probably the most consistent expression of this tenet that acknowledges and promotes religion as a source of general moral rules (like justice, consideration, responsibility or compassion) but avoids ascribing to it normative determinacy in solving concrete

---

<sup>132</sup> Abdul Matin even lists concrete technical instructions for such adjustments (2010, 60–64).

social, political or economic questions, including the environmental ones. As such, it may also be viewed as a pronounced representation of the more general trend characteristic of Islamic environmental activism in Western secular countries, which is evident already from the examples mentioned in the previous section.

This suit has been followed by other associations operating in the North American milieu. An example in point may be *Khaleafa.com*, a Canadian organization founded and headed by Muaz Nasir, a self-styled Muslim environmentalist and a proficient author (the online Canadian Muslim journal IQRA alone features about 40 of his shorter articles on different themes from Islam and climate justice and green Ramadan to Islam and fair trade [see IQRA n.d.]). As one may note, the tendency to hybridity and a “secular-religious syncretism” observed already in Abdul-Matin’s approach is well present also in the identity of the Canadian organization that modifies the central term of the Islamic environmentalist *catechism* in wordplay of *Khaleafa* (leaf as a symbol also appears in its logo). The core of the organization’s agenda comprises advocacy, again along lines similar to those signified by Abdul-Matin. Aside from running a blog on its website, the group also organizes an annual campaign of the *Green Khutba*. Launched first in 2012 by Nasir and other activists, it promotes a delivery of khutba focused on raising environmental awareness every year around Earth Day on April 22,<sup>133</sup> for which it also provides resource materials (including a „sample khutba“) and a specific theme for each year. Addressees of the campaign are invited to promote it via social networks and to record and publish the khutbas (see Khaleafa 2022; see also other sources on the website). Also, in this case, multiple signs of hybridization and deterritorialization of the Islamic normativity and identity (such as mingling of Arabic and English terms and Islamic and environmentalist symbols as well as connecting the traditional event of the sermon with the “secular holy day” of the Earth day) appear.

Another example of the creativity and mingling of Muslim identity with generic forms of environmental activism and its specific genres appears in the 2020 collection, “Forty Green Hadith,” compiled by two Muslim activists from the US (see Latif and Majeed 2020). The brochure, available online to be printed

---

<sup>133</sup> One may note here another example of hybridity connecting together the „secular“ feast day with the traditional Islamic institution of *khutba*.

and distributed freely, is structured into five thematic parts covering “water,” “earth,” “plants,” “animals,” and “lifestyle.” Each of them is introduced by a selected Qur’anic verse and brief commentary, after which follow hadiths in a bilingual Arabic-English fashion. The hadiths are left without commentary as if to speak by themselves. Instead of commentary, the final part, called “Discussion and Reflection,” presents 19 questions like “What are some ways to help more Muslims become active in protecting the Earth?” or “What is one thing you plan to do differently in your personal life after reading this compilation of green hadith?” (Latif and Majeed 2020, 43).

To investigate the whole landscape of the Islamic environmental discourse in the UK, US, and other Western countries would require much more extensive space. Let me thus again refer here to the already mentioned reference sources (see especially Hancock 2018), which—as it is useful to say—still leave ample room for further research. The above-mentioned examples have been, for now, sufficient to illustrate the discursive specificities that seem to prevail in what may be regarded as a distinct subculture. I will further discuss its significance and relationship to other strands of the discourse in the second part of this chapter.

### **5.1.2 The „Islamic Scholar“ Identity in the Context of the Middle East**

Above, I have followed the emergence of the activist movement in the West, with the stress on its discursive specificities. This obviously begs the question. What about the “East?” Did a comparable surge of interest in the Islam-environment intersection also emerge in Muslim-majority countries? The answer to this question has already been partially given. As already shown in the previous chapter on examples of MEPA-related activity (and later that connected to ISESCO), this interest occurred relatively early. However, the development of the discourse seems to have taken a markedly different trajectory. In the Middle Eastern context, the prevailing form of the discourse in the West—the civic form of Muslim environmental activism—has not taken root (see 4.3.4), and this seems to be the case also for most other Muslim-majority countries, albeit with some exceptions, of which the most relevant is Indonesia. This, however, does not mean



that the landscape of the Islamic environmental discourse would remain completely barren across the Arab world. In fact, the topic has been, except for the limited and rather temporary activity of a couple of governmental agencies and organizations, addressed by a distinct group of actors: Islamic scholars. As it will be evident, Islamic scholars also have been relatively prolific in their literary production and sometimes elaborated the question of “Islam and the environment” into considerable breath, and this is even though their activity has, ultimately, achieved only a limited public influence. In what follows, I will focus especially on the discursive aspects of their contribution, which has hitherto evaded systematic scholarly attention. This will—in its marked difference from the expressions analyzed in the previous section—further illustrate the diversity of the landscape of “Islamic environmentalism” as well as the importance of particular cultures and identities in shaping the Islamic response to environmental themes.

#### 5.1.2.a *The Emergence of the Discourse in the Middle-Eastern Context*

First, it is useful to briefly return to the question of the origin of the discourse in this context. This question has already been partly answered in the previous chapter, which investigated the activity of the newly established Saudi governmental agency of MEPA as a significant catalyst for its emergence. The already discussed circumstances of the publication of the influential 1983 *Islamic Principles* (Ba Kader et al. 1983; see 4.2.1.a) have also already illustrated some crucial aspects of the social context within which the discourse emerged—this was, except the direct participation of the established international ENGO of IUCN, the introduction of the professionalized conservationist agenda into the region. The Western-educated specialists in environment-related areas have also been already identified as the key early promoters of the discourse through other channels, particularly in academic periodicals (cf. Llewellyn 1982; 1983; 1984; Bakhashab 1988). The assumption that the early development of the discourse was connected to this particular milieu can also be supported by a broader outlook.

A useful example may be one of the first book-length publications on Islam and the environment in Arabic issued in 1993 by Abd al-Qadir al-Faqqi, an Egyptian national born in 1953, later having graduated in chemical engineering and working in the oil industry, including ARAMCO, and organizations responsible for the protection of the marine environment (see Africa Vivre, n.d.; Goodreads 2023). The book appeared under the title *The Environment: Its Problems, Questions and Its Protection from the Pollution, the Islamic View* (Faqqi 1993). A look into it can illustrate some specificity of the author's discourse, supplementing the picture already provided by other early sources. Like in other instances of publications aiming to educate about environmental issues, the book is structured thematically. After a relatively extensive discussion of the general meaning of the concept of the environment (*bī'a*) from an etymological and semantic, contemporary scientific, and finally, Islamic point of view (Faqqi 1993, 8–25), individual chapters treat in detail topics of environmental pollution in general, pollution of air, water, soil, noise pollution, petrol pollution, acid rains, pesticide pollution, pollution by drugs and medicines, pollution of food; and finally, some specific problems like ozone layer depletion, climate change, toxic waste disposal, extinction of species and depletion of natural resources. In each of the chapters, al-Faqqi provides relatively detailed scientific information on the given topic, including the explanation of chemical processes and phenomena related to the given problem (like the greenhouse effect in the case of climate change), or for example, provides a list of pollutants and harmful substances like lead or cadmium. Concurrently, the scientific information is at given places glossed by excerpts of the Qur'an, which may either highlight the fact that the given phenomena (like water, air, or soil) are reflected upon in the scripture or directly connect particular environmental harm to morally deplorable conduct. In this sense, al-Faqqi's aim seems to be twofold: first, to educate the reader about the scope and underlying principles of environmental harms, and second, to document by the textual excerpts from the tradition that Islam explicitly proscribes such harms to occur. Finally, the last part of the book contains a more detailed analysis of the problem of *wasting (isrāf)* and *purity (tahāra)*, wherein al-Faqqi draws on more extensive sources of hadith and *fiqh* (while still combining them with some scientific information) to stress the compatibility of the Islamic

moral outlook with the demand of environmental protection and conservation (Faqqi 1993, 205–229). Overall, the motives that al-Faqqi employs overlap with the repertoire evidenced in the English-language texts. Still, there are some differences. Whereas in what we have hitherto investigated, the concept of *khilāfa* was usually central, al-Faqqi tends to largely omit it and draws instead on the fundament of God’s creatorship and the Qur’anic reprobation of *fasād* and *ifsād* (cf. 2.2.2.i) as the primary moral principles (see Faqqi 1993, 19–22). As such, *fasād* is virtually identified with the problem of pollution (*talawwuth*) on which the whole book puts much stress. The direct juxtaposition of the scientific conceptualizations of the environment and the Qur’anic conceptualizations of the creation and moral principles is clearly something that is less usual in the Anglophone context where a more distinct boundary between the spheres of *moral* (values, ethics, intentions) and *material* (the actual natural processes falling in the purview of science and technical expertise) is usually drawn. In what follows, this mingling, highlighting an inclination towards more *literalism* in applying Islamic terms on environmental matters, will also be documented in the discourse of Islamic scholars.

In General, al-Faqqi’s book may be counted as one of the *early* examples of the Islamic discourse on the environment in the Arabic Middle Eastern context. In his references, al-Faqqi lists only two Arabic publications devoted to the Islam-environment nexus preceding his own, which includes Zain al-Din ‘Abd al-Maqsud’s 1986 *al-Bi’a wa al-Islam: Ru’ya Islamiya* published in Kuwait (the author being also a technical expert in the area of environmental conservation)<sup>134</sup> and an Arabic edition of the *Islamic Principles* (Ba Kader et al. 1983). This points toward the relative novelty of the theme, which, notably, was not picked up in this case by an Islamic scholar educated at a madrasa but a “laic” expert in natural sciences. In fact, al-Faqqi draws (in contrast to religious literature) on a relatively plentiful scale of scientific publications about the environment and environmental problems of various kinds (without relation to Islam) in Arabic published throughout the 1980s. This documents the proliferation of the expert-centred discourse on the environment in the Arabic world throughout the period, mainly in

---

<sup>134</sup> Unfortunately, I have not been able to obtain a copy of this, perhaps the earliest, book-length publication on Islam and the environment in Arabic.

the Gulf countries and frequently through the newly established environmental protection authorities and university departments (cf. Faqqi 1993, 231–237).

Both the publication of the *Islamic Principles* by MEPA and the activity of al-Faqqi and others demonstrate that the idea to investigate the issue of environmental problems and science from the perspective of Islam took hold relatively quickly and gained traction in the region, at least in the Gulf countries and Egypt. In this context, it is useful to realize that the issue of environment was not unique in this regard, as other publications and conferences emerged on topics ranging from the Islamic perspective on education, science (see also above), medicine, development, and politics. This must arguably be put in relation to the fact that in the period of the 1970s and 1980s, the effort to connect Islam with socio-political issues (manifested, among other things, by the emergence of Islamic political movements and the broader phenomena of Islamism; see, e.g., Roy 1994) was widespread.

The Islamic discourse on the environment appeared in the Middle Eastern context in the 1980s and 1990s still from other sources. In 1991, the Egyptian journal published in Cairo, *al-Muslim al-Mu'asir (The Contemporary Muslim)*, published Ziauddin Sardar's article on the matter (Sardar 1991), one which largely reproduces the discourse represented in other studies published by the author and by his coauthors throughout the preceding period (see e.g. Sardar 1984a; cf. 3.2.2) and which ruminates the *possibility* of establishing a genuinely Islamic environmental thinking. Sardar first in detail elaborates on what are the „ethical principles“ (*al-mabādi' al-akhlāqīyya*) of ecology based on the Western secular environmentalist discourse and then debates the question of what is the Muslim stance towards them. Characteristically, he asserts upon this basis the presence of inherently ecological posture within the broader Islamic ethical worldview (even though, he alleges, it fell from usage due to the process of modernization and Westernization). Finally, he puts forth a characteristic repertoire of themes, from *tawhīd* and *khilāfa* up to the application of the legal tenets of shari'a as a conceptual framework to be applied (Sardar 1991).

To this end, Sardar cites the articles of Manzoor, Haider, and Llewellyn (see Manzoor 1984; Haider 1984; Llewellyn 1982). If we look back at al-Faqqi, he, however, does not quote Sardar (nor, for example, Naseef's Asissi Declaration

of 1986), which, again, may point toward the limited interconnectedness of the discourse, lacking coordinated networking and being driven more by the personal curiosity of individuals. At the same time, it is necessary to point out that the reconstruction of the genesis of the discourse is hampered in this regard by the fact that later authors (like al-Qaradawi or Shirazi; see below) do not cite their sources, except for the scriptural tradition. Given this academic misdemeanor, it is impossible to establish whether and to what degree the individual authors were influenced by preceding layers of the discourse or on what sources they drew (while it is at the same time unlikely that their texts were written completely “from scratch”).

Nevertheless, after the primeval steps, the production and circulation of the discourse gained pace towards the end of the millennium. These were clearly helped and accelerated by the growing prominence of the environmental topic in the public space—after all, one of the central aims of Agenda 21 adopted at the 1991 Rio Summit was environmental education (see also 4.1.1). This must also be seen as a main contributing factor that the theme eventually became the focus of a new group of actors—Islamic scholars who also subsequently became the main proponents of the Islam-environment connection in the Middle Eastern context.

Serving as guardians of orthodox Islam cultivated at madrasas and preoccupied both with preserving and commenting upon the older layers of the tradition and its adaptation to contemporary issues and problems, the scholars seem to be driven by a comparatively different set of motivations than laic activists in the West. The main one was to demonstrate that Islam has—like in other cases—a comprehensive answer to what was increasingly perceived as a significant socio-political issue. This interest ultimately led to the emergence of a specific field represented by a modest literary production as well as other expressions in the form of public comments and sermons, largely separated from the Western or other international context as well as discursively specific.

As an illustration of this trend and the specificities of the discourse, the treatise from the pen of Yusuf al-Qaradawi issued in 2001 under the title *Ri‘ayat al-Bi‘a fi Shari‘at al-Islam* (Care for the Environment in the Islamic Shari‘a) may serve as an ideal case, not least because it still remains one of the most

voluminous and elaborate texts devoted to “Islam and the environment” in any context.

### 5.1.2.b *Integrating the Environment into the Islamic Worldview: Yusuf al-Qaradawi*

Al-Qaradawi’s book (2001) arguably, up to this day, comprises one of the most elaborate works devoted to the topic of “Islam and the environment,” simultaneously authored by an influential scholar, even if the actual influence of the book on readership is hard to establish. Yusuf al-Qaradawi (d. 2022) may be regarded as one of the most influential personalities in the latter part of the 20th-century Islamic discourse. Born in Egypt in 1926, he took up the education and career of an Islamic scholar and cleric. Early upon its establishment by Hassan al-Banna in 1928, he became influenced by and later directly involved in the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood, which became a part of his life-long identity and doctrinal orientation. This can be well designated as „activist“ already from his studies at al-Azhar University (Barnhard 2015, 75). The specific nature of al-Qaradawi’s activism can be best caught by the word *da‘wa*, i.e., the spreading of the message of Islam, also corresponding to the Egyptian scholar’s own view of his life-long mission (73). Al-Qaradawi’s *da‘wa* took a specific shape, influenced by his commitment to the Muslim Brothers’ ideology, and that is one of promotion of the role of Islam as a response to social and political problems and an antidote to the Western hegemony over the Muslim world (75–76). Corresponding to that was also al-Qaradawi’s general doctrinal position, combining the stress on piety and social conservatism with the attempts to adapt the Islamic message to the modernization challenges. Al-Qaradawi’s personal identity of *dā‘ī* was reflected in his prolific activity as an author and, in the 1990s, took a boost thanks to Qatari patronage.<sup>135</sup> This first made him a speaker in a weekly television program, „Shari‘a and Life,“ on al-Jazeera and subsequently enabled him to travel abroad and further foster the role of a „Global Islamic authority“ (80), commenting on actual matters related to Islam to a big audience. This whole context makes it not

---

<sup>135</sup> Al-Qaradawi established his links in the country already in the 1960s when he was forced therein in an effective exile by the Nassirist repression of the Muslim Brotherhood (Barnhard 2015, 79).

so surprising that al-Qaradawi eventually took an interest in the timely theme of environmental problems. At the same time, as already mentioned, it was the ISESCO-organized conference in Jeddah in 2000 that prompted him to devote a whole book to it, which he finished a year later. Even if sparse, the linkages of the broader, transnational Islamic-environmentalist assemblage thus appear here again.

Al-Qaradawi's treatise (2001), which, as it will become apparent, shares commonalities with the broader approach of Islamic scholars, can be viewed as both similar to and different from other expressions of the Islamic discourse on the environment interrogated in this work. The main similarity comprises the adherence to the basic structure of what has been identified above as the „moral response“ to ecology. Like many others, al-Qaradawi categorizes environmental harms as evil and proposes Islam as a source of guidance, together with the extensive employment of generic scriptural themes—the above-discussed catechism. At the same time, however, he approaches the theme with a specific method of an Islamic scholar and ultimately also endows it with a distinct framing.

Whereas, in most of other hitherto investigated texts (and particularly in the Anglophone activist discourse), the tendency has been apparent towards what may be viewed as hybridity—combining Islamic normativity with concepts of the „secular“ agenda of environmental conservation and its partial or overall subjection to it—or at least a willingness to establish a dialogue with other doctrines and forms of knowledge, al-Qaradawi's approach may be viewed as a paragon example of the effort to avoid such syncretism. The Egyptian author articulates a view that attempts to address the issue of the environment comprehensively and in a self-standing way, drawing, where possible, solely on the scriptural tradition, independently of „external“ normative sources. These, although they occur in al-Qaradawi's text (represented mainly by science), serve ultimately only as the authority of second grade, used typically to ex-post corroborate the conclusions underpinned (primarily) by the Qur'an and sunna and (secondarily) the traditional Islamic sciences.

This approach may be illustrated already in the initial exposition of the theme of the environment, which the author defines first in religious terms as the

place of temporary human residence between his departure from the garden (*janna*) and the Day of Judgement, and as a perfected creation of God who established its proper characteristics for human life, signified particularly by the balance (*mīzān*) of its various components (Qaradawi 2001, 12–15). This is only thereafter supplemented by the scientific perspective, viewed as ex-post attesting to the veracity of the general Qur’anic observations.<sup>136</sup> The notion of perfectly created cosmic order (that is, as one may note, overtly based on the typical perfect design argument; cf. Glacken 1967, vii; see also 3.1.2.c) may be related to another distinct characteristic of al-Qaradawi’s approach, that also reflects his disposition of a conservative scholar—the view the Islamic revelation primarily as an (equally as perfected) normative system. In this sense, a clear analogy may be seen here between the created order inscribed into nature and the prescribed order conveyed to mankind to guide both individual and collective action. From al-Qaradawi’s perspective, the revealed normative order of Islam presents sufficient and comprehensive guidance, not least in the area of the man-environment relationship.

This is also clearly reflected in the structure of the whole book. Its first expansive part (about two-thirds of the entire volume) is devoted to the exposition of the Islamic normativity related to environmental matters, independently of any other sources. Faithful to his scholarly disposition, al-Qaradawi elaborates on the subject methodically: while the first chapter presents „grounding“ of the care for the environment in shari‘a (*ta’ṣīl shar‘ī*), going through each of the relevant sciences (*‘ulūm*), the second chapter, based on these, outlines the „Islamic pillars“ (*rakā’iz*) of the care for the environment divided into total eight sections involving „tree plantation and greening,“ „construction and cultivation,“ „cleanliness and purification,“ „conservation of resources,“ „preservation of human health,“ „kindness to the environment,“ „protection of the environment from destruction,“ and „preservation of the environmental balance.“ The intention of this first part of al-Qaradawi’s treatment of the topic seems relatively clear: to demonstrate that the revealed Islamic normativity (approached through the legal lens of *fiqh*) possesses sufficient conceptual means and instruments to regulate the area of man-

---

<sup>136</sup> Al-Qaradawi in this regard, alludes to the so-called anthropic principle—signifying that physical constants and other proprieties of the universe are „fine tuned“ to enable human and other life (2001, 15–18).



environment relationship and simultaneously to illustrate this ability through deducing concrete, practical norms applied on concrete cases. Overall, the outcome of this effort, remarkable by its extent, must be seen as highly specific, especially in comparison with the other examples of the Islamic environmental discourse that has been hitherto examined.

Its first distinct characteristic is its tendency toward formalism. This obviously ensues from the author's intention to put forth as comprehensive legal treatment of the question as possible but also to demonstrate the breadth of Islamic legal doctrine that can be applied to it. Al-Qaradawi's text thus abounds with legal concepts that do not usually appear in other layers of the discourse—the issue of the environment is put in relation to various categories like the three aims of human life (i.e. *'ibāda*, *chilāfa*, *'imāra* [Qaradawi 2001, 23]), five rulings (*ahkām* [38]), the rules of worship (*'ibādāt* [39]) categorization of legal sanctions (*ta'zīr* and *hudūd*; [42]), five necessities (*al-darūrīyāt al-khamsa*) springing from the principle of *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* (44–52; see also 2.2.2.k) and others. It is in relation to these categories that al-Qaradawi also thematizes the concepts that normally appear in the catechism, like *khilāfa*, or *fasād*, endowing them thus with a more determinate meaning within the comprehensive ehtico-religious framework. By that, he clearly surpasses the typical method of actualizing the catechism as rather loose moral principles.

Closely related to that is what may be viewed as *holism*. The area of care for the environment surpasses what is usually identified with environmental agenda in secular terms. As such, it includes, among other things, the correct performance of ablution (*wudū'* and *ghusl*), home hygiene (Qaradawi 2001, 77), and veterinary procedures (90). A whole section is devoted to the preservation of human health, yet, remarkably, this does not mean preservation from environmental risks, as could be expected, but rather health in general, as al-Qaradawi views humans as another part of the environment that has to be cared for, too (105). This holism may be viewed as partly natural but still a distinct expression of a peculiar religious commitment—as the environment is ultimately identified with the created world and the care for the environment with the care for the whole creation. This may be illustrated in the passage where al-Qaradawi stresses the ethical dimension of this care based on the dictum that „religion is

how one behaves“ (*al-dīn mu‘āmalā*): „[that is] to improve your behavior in every respect: beginning with the behavior to your Lord, and the behavior to yourself, which means your bodily, mental and spiritual element and the behavior to the people around you be they close or distant to you, Muslim or non-believer [*kāfir*] and to the other creatures around you: non-living and living, silent and speaking, sentient and non-sentient“ (23).

Another distinct trait that can be identified in al-Qaradawi’s discourse is a strong *moralist* tendency. Although the author employs many legal categories, these eventually reflect a more direct and simpler dichotomy of *good* and *bad*, *right* and *wrong*. A sound relationship with the environment ultimately does not depend on complicated schemes or tradeoffs but on following what is presented by al-Qaradawi as a set of largely unequivocal and evident norms. Except for the positive deeds incumbent upon the believer (like tree-planting, cultivating, and maintaining hygiene), these include especially avoiding things that are forbidden. These also comprise the bulk of concrete prescriptions spelled out by al-Qaradawi in his text. This may be illustrated by the misdeeds categorized as destruction of the environment out of negligence, which he lists after going through other categories of destruction out of cruelty, anger, vain and without imminent necessity:

As examples [of the destruction out of negligence], we may mention neglect of animals so that they perish by hunger or disease; neglect of crops so that they are destroyed by natural calamities; neglect of cereals, fruits, and foods so that they succumb to rot and pests; neglect of clothes so that they are eaten by moths; neglect of buildings and structures so that they decay; neglect of devices so that they corrode; and also letting lights on during daytime so that they consume electricity without necessity; not turning taps off so that they release water in vain; throwing away leftovers of food although there are people sustaining themselves on bread and water; disposing of usable clothes due to minor defect or because they are out of fashion, even though there are people in the society searching for a cloth to patch a rip and protect themselves from heat and cold (Al-Qaradawi 2001, 147–148).

Similarly, detailed injunctions are also given in the area of the care for animals to which al-Qaradawi puts much stress, taking pride (2001, 96) in the uniqueness of Islamic regulations in this regard:

And it is forbidden to overburden animals so that they suffer under the

load because it is abuse. And it is forbidden to milk at the expense of the calf because the milk was created for the calf equally as the mother's milk is for the child, and it is a [good] custom for the milker to clip his nails not to injure the teat. And it is forbidden to beat in the face or to brand on the face because he who upon whom be peace [i.e., the Prophet] damned those who beat and brand on face [...]. Too is reprobate to trim mane, forelock, and tail, and to tie a bell to a neck of milch camel and to overfeed or force-feed [...] (96).

Overall, al-Qaradawi's approach in the book's first part can be viewed as a single-minded (and in many ways remarkable) attempt to derive normativity governing man's relationship to the environment, as if, solely from the Islamic "code" (cf. 1.2.1.b) and render it comprehensive and self-sufficient.

Still, from here, the book proceeds toward a second part. In it, it addresses, even if somewhat abstractly, the „modern“ environmental problems. It is also in this part where he ultimately gives voice to scientific information. In several sections of the chapter „Environmental Risks,“ al-Qaradawi goes through risks presented by pollution affecting water, air, and soil, the dangers of various pollutants, and the exhaustion of natural resources. Drawing apparently on scientific (albeit unspecified) sources, he covers the topic sometimes in minute details, explaining the mechanisms of transmission of waterborne diseases through sewage, methods of water treatment, toxicity of lead or tin, health effects of air pollution, or the polluting impacts of nuclear technology and weapons (see 157–217). While Qur'anic quotations and religious allusions periodically intersperse this part, too, these are comparatively less represented than in the other parts. Generally, it is held that both avoidance of pollution of any kind and application of technological means of its prevention and remedy are welcomed and obligatory (*wājib*). This may also be supported by analogy with the explicit injunctions derived from the scriptures and the corpus of traditional *fiqh* literature (e.g., the forbidding of defecation into water; cf. 169–170; see also 2.2.2.j).

Eventually, the whole treatise is concluded by a return to the moralist and religious tone in the last three shorter chapters focused on what „corrupts“ (*tufsid*) the environment and what are the suitable „Islamic means“ for environmental care put then in the context of „contemporary historical reality.“ Al-Qaradawi's answer to the first question is clear—the ultimate source of corruption in the outer world is the corruption in the moral realm and the deviation from what has been earlier

presented as the perfected norm for human life. The transgression in human life and society ultimately leads to transgression and corruption of the natural order: „Indeed, the corruption of the environment ultimately stems from the corruption of mankind; and the environment will not heal until man heals“ (Qaradawi 2000, 222). Consequentially, its sources are defined accordingly as „changing of [true] nature“ (*fiṭra*), „injustice“ (*ẓulm*), „haughtiness“ (*‘uluw fi al-arḍ*), „lust“ (*hawā*), „transgression of balance“ (*mizān*), and „ingratitude to God’s blessings“ (*kufṛ bi-an ‘ām allāh*) (220–231). The means of remedy are, in turn, viewed in education and enlightenment, social disciplining through mutual control and motivation among believers, punishment by governmental and public institutions (defined by al-Qaradawi through the traditional concept of *walī al-amr*), and, finally, also (mentioned just at one place) cooperation with international organizations (232–240). This is further elaborated by mentioning the institutions of *khilāfa* (here in the political sense), *qaḍā’* (judiciary), *hisba* (public inspection), *waqf* (charity and donation), *zakāt* and still others, together with pointing out precedents from historical Islamic societies (see 242–253).

Still, notwithstanding the number of examples of Islamic concepts and institutions applicable to the problem, the work concludes with a comparatively simple message. This, faithful to al-Qaradawi’s overall disposition of a *dā’i*, exhorts, as an essential step and precondition of solution to environmental problems, the return to God:

There is no other remedy to environmental problems and risks than curing man himself, as he is the one who has corrupted the environment, and he must also rectify it. And man cannot heal from his outside, but only from his inside, through his soul, harboring his two inclinations [i.e., good and evil] [...] There is no other way than to impose on the corrupters of the environment stringent laws and punishments, but this by itself will not solve the problems with its roots, until what is in man’s soul is not repaired. Man’s soul can be repaired by one thing only that has no counterpart, and this is belief in the noble God, his message, and the afterlife (Qaradawi 2001, 257).

Here, the structure of al-Qaradawi’s work can also be eventually overviewed and summarized: this begins with the first section conveying the representation of the lawful social order as intended and prescribed by God, demonstrating its relevance for the issues of the environment. Subsequently, the second part details the types, causes, and principles of current-day environmental

problems and how to avoid them from the practical and technical point of view. Lastly, the final part integrates the preceding two, not only by pointing out possibilities of applying Islamic solutions to the current crisis but also by stressing the essential moral message proposed by the author, namely that the crisis could not arise except in revolt against God and his order and can be resolved only by ending this revolt and returning to the right path. Against the trend exemplified in the previous section through the example of the Anglophone diasporic activism, al-Qaradawi's approach may be thus considered as not just resolutely in favor of White's thesis of the conditionality of human conduct toward nature on its moral understandings, but escalating this view towards the notion of conditionality of sound ecological practice on the strict faithfulness the given type of Islamic orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

Based on this and focusing on still some other facets of the Egyptian scholar's treatment of the question, a couple of other observations can be made. First, although al-Qaradawi draws on scientific understandings and information about the environment throughout the text and ultimately strives to present them as coherent with religious viewpoint (as, after all, a more general consensus goes; cf. 5.2.1.c), his views still may be seen as skewed to the latter and ultimately also as controversial from the environmentalist viewpoint on some occasions. While al-Qaradawi characteristically assumes primordial balance in the environment as created by God, he goes in this assumption further than many others, effectively refuting that there would be an inherent conflict between the environment and human "developmental" activities often discussed in the environmentalist discourses. Thus, while stipulating that human activity has to be limited and subjected to rules, he, on the other hand, claims that the "blessings" (*an'ām*) of the environment are, in fact, undepletable (since innumerable; cf. 2.2.2.d) if used with adequate gratefulness (*shukr*) to God and that they even may be aggrandized by human action. Such a belief results in rather a benign attitude towards economic development, unusual for environmentalist literature, even in the Islamic context: human settlement and economic activities, including the building of factories or expanding agricultural areas, are lauded and viewed as necessary or even obligatory (Qaradawi 2001, 32–35, 69–80).<sup>137</sup> Environmental harm stemming

---

<sup>137</sup> The quoted passages are the main ones focusing on the topic of utilization of resources. Verses 11:61 and 7:74 containing phrases „he settled you on it [i.e. the earth]“ (*ista marakum fihā*),

from economic development goes virtually unadmitted. Also, the danger of overpopulation is simply dismissed. Given that the sources are delineated as „innumerable“ in the Qur'an, their alleged scarcity must be caused by *kufir* („disregard, “ which implies „disbelief“) and *zulm* („wrongdoing“). The idea of the antinomy between the growth of the population and its subsistence is designated „Western“ and rejected (Qaradawi 2001, 32).

This relates directly to the second issue, comprising the practical relevance and adequacy of the presented tenets. In this regard, the voluminous treatise must be seen at many points as, to the very least, ambiguous from the mainstream environmentalist viewpoint. While the author attempts to educate his readers on some significant matters like the harmfulness of certain substances or practices and voices categorical positions on a few concrete issues (like the excessive consumption or use of nuclear technology), the alleged normative perfection of the Islamic system of morality is, in overall terms, not demonstrated by sufficiently practical or concrete injunctions that would be conceivably relevant to the issues of author's present. Paradoxically, al-Qaradawi painstakingly details forbidden practices of treating animals as preserved in the older layers of Islamic tradition (see above) but stays limited precisely to them and to the forms of abuse characteristic rather (albeit not exclusively) of the premodern societies. He omits the practices that are more relevant to the present, such as industrial farming. Analogically, the elaborate review of obligations and prohibitions enforced by *muhtasib* applicable to traditional crafts and occupations (like milling, blacksmithing, hand-craft baking or butchering, or running public baths [cf. Qaradawi 2001, 247–253]) is not extended towards more contemporary problems like the use of plastics (the harmfulness of which in the form of waste is acknowledged elsewhere in general terms only, and separated from the thematization of everyday conduct [cf. 165]), particular consumer products, or means of transportation. Equally so, al-Qaradawi avoids criticizing or even thematizing concrete environmental policies of Muslim countries, including those of his own residence or those from which he garners support for his own activities. Unwilling to doubt the cherished tenet of material and economic

---

or „he settled you on the earth“ (*bawwa'akum fī al-arḍ*) are interpreted as a duty to settle the earth and to perform an activity on it. The agriculture is considered *ḥard al-kifāya* drawing on al-Qarṭabī (Qaradawi 2001, 60). For similar views, see Shihata (2001, 49–50) or Izzi Dien (2000, 145–146).

development, he thus avoids scrutinizing concrete strategies and paths in the areas of extraction of natural resources (like oil or water), industrial or urban development, and motorism—in short, the issues comprising the central theme of most of the environmentalist discussions (and often picked up jointly by the Western Muslim environmentalists and „secular“ environmentalists in the Muslim countries). This, arguably, may, for some, put in doubt the practicality and credibility of the presented vision of integral Islamic „environmental order.“

Finally, this apparent lacuna can be contrasted to (and perhaps also partly explained by) the instances wherein the criticism is indeed specific and to the last underlying theme characteristic of the whole statement. Ultimately, al-Qaradawi does not leave much doubt about his identification of the culprit of the ecological disorder plaguing our present. Remarkably, he identifies it not only with irreligion and secularism as immoral and mistaken attitudes (a notion that implicitly ensues from the intensive stress on orthodoxy and is by no means unique, as evidenced earlier) but much more concretely with the civilizational “agency” of the West and chiefly the US. Along with references to the Chernobyl catastrophe in the USSR (see Qaradawi 2001, 173, 188–189), the West is used as a source of examples of the infamous environmental „sins“ like the export of dangerous wastes into developing countries (182–183),<sup>138</sup> the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam and nuclear bombardment of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (150–151), and the use of depleted uranium munitions in Iraq (176). Commenting upon the incident of the alleged clandestine release of municipal waste by a US ship to the sea bottom in 1987 (184), al-Qaradawi uses these sins as a pretext for a passionate moral criticism:

And this is the scandalous childish behavior of a nation that aspires to be a world leader in the „new world order“—but where will it lead? If we let it lead, it will lead us to the same place where this ship released its cargo! It will lead it to the place of burial of this rubbish, and we may hardly expect any different when the ideological bankruptcy there became so thorough, with no method, no pattern, no good example, but one day, the world will know that God is the manifest truth (184).

Ultimately, this motive is restated in a more systematic manner in the section titled „Anxiety of scientists and philosophers about the fate of the civilization“—the only passage in which al-Qaradawi quotes extensively from

---

<sup>138</sup> Here, however, al-Qaradawi also lambasts local rulers for accepting the unfair trade.

Western environmentalists like René Dubois or Stewart Udall but also cultural critics like the French physician and eugenicist Alexis Carrel. The quotations, characteristically focused on the contradictions and the unsustainable basis of modern Western civilization, are used as proof of its fundamental corruption:

Today, at the beginning of the 21st century and the third millennium of the Christian era, we say that civilization is in the age of technological progress, biological revolution, the conquest of space, and the information and communication revolution—but it has spread its darkness over societies and humans, it has harmed both the inanimate and animate creatures and the man himself. And all creatures have complained about the abuses committed against them by it and its cruelty towards them; it imposed corruption upon man and upon animal and inanimate; it corrupted soil, and corrupted air, and corrupted water, and also corrupted food and medicine. It corrupted the earth, the atmosphere, and the sky. The man is beginning to worry that this civilization is destined for destruction and that it will be wrecked by its pride, arrogance, and thuggishness, as other nations destroyed by it before, which „transgressed throughout the land and spread corruption therein, so your Lord unleashed on them a scourge of punishment, as your Lord is indeed vigilant“ [89:11–14] (al-Qaradawi, 197).

Clearly, al-Qaradawi’s version of the „Islamic view“ of environmental questions thus broadens the repertoire of positions that have already been encountered. While many of its elements, like the belief in the ability to resolve (among others) environmental dilemmas, or the critique of modernity, can be traced or compared to other strands of the discourse, others are specific. This is, in the first place, the belief that the Islamic tradition provides, instead of a mere inspiration or a broad ethical guidance, a perfected and “ready-made” system of norms and morality spanning across centuries and sufficient for application without any other source of external normativity. Second, it is also the view that the acceptance of the Islamic message and the strict adherence to God’s law is the only practically sustainable way of redemption from ecological decay. In al-Qaradawi’s view, there is then (unlike in Nasr) little space for the contribution of other religious traditions or (unlike among Western activists) secular environmentalism. The evil of the environmental harms and problems is, often literally, identified with the strongly morally charged notions of corruption (*fasād* or *ifsād*), ingratitude to God (*kufr*), denial of his message and mercy, and this is to the point that there is no resolution to the crisis than the piety and orthodoxy itself.



Al-Qaradawi thus, in its full scale, displays the potential of religious environmentalism to be mobilized as an identitarian discourse targeted at the virtual “other”—in this case embodied by contemporary Western societies, which are explicitly identified as transgressors of God-given order and put in contrast with the virtue and decency of the society envisioned by the Egyptian scholar’s rigid notion of Islamic norms and mores. This accentuation also demonstrates the implicit apologetic dimension of the discourse, which may, in many other cases, go unnoticed but, as it will be argued later, comprises its lasting potential component. The attitude demonstrated by al-Qaradawi is, at the same time, not unique in this regard and can also be evidenced in other cases among traditionalist scholars in the contemporary landscape of Middle Eastern Islam.

#### 5.1.2.c *The Scholarly Discourse*

Al-Qaradawi has not been the only traditional religious authority picking up the theme of the environment around the turn of the millennium. In 1999, *The Environment: The Islamic Dimension* by Fu’ad al-Sartawi (otherwise a little-known author) from the Faculty of Law, Philadelphia University in Jordan was issued (Sartawi 1999). One year later, in 2000, then saw a publication by a prominent Iraqi Shi‘i mujtahid, Muhammad Husain Shirazi, *The Environment, The Islamic Jurisprudence*, issued in Beirut (Shirazi 2000). Among others figure *The Islamic Religion’s View on Environmental Protection* the Egyptian, al-Azhar-based Abdallah Shihata (2001) or *The Pollution and the Protection of Environment: Questions of Environment from the Islamic Perspective* by Muhammad Munir Hajjab (2002), or a more recent one, by the Moroccan conservative scholar Mustafa bin Hamza under the generic title of *Islam and the Environment* (2016). Other publications can also be found in Persian, most notably by one of the doyens of the Iranian Islamic Republic establishment, Abdallah Javadi-Amoli, *Islam and the Environment* (2016; see also, e.g., Lafmejani 2005).

The literary production and scholarly interest have not been limited to book-length publications but have also included articles in journals focused on *fiqh* (see Kalyani 2014; Isa 2018) contributions at conferences, including one

hosted by the above-mentioned Al Al-Bayt Institute (Khalili 2010a; Qaradawi 2010) and others (Khalili 2010b),<sup>139</sup> with at least one conference, organized on 3rd and 4th December 2012 at the University of Guelma, Algeria under the title „Elements of sustainability in Islamic Economics“ devoted specifically to the topic (cf. Saliha 2012). The topic of „Islam and the environment“ has also been thematized in sermons (see, e.g., Nabulusi 2010; Rajab 2018; The Department of Sermons 2022)<sup>140</sup> and found its way into media, including the repeated comments by the highest Egyptian religious authorities (Gum‘a 2011; Khuri 2021; see also Qaradawi 2005).

As such, it is evident that the topic of „Islam and the environment“ has hardly remained unaddressed by Islamic scholars and the broader religious establishment, at least in the context of the Middle East, but it is, on the contrary, well-known. Since approximately the same time we evidenced the first independent publication activities in the UK (and even earlier), Islamic scholars have shown continuous interest in the topic of environment, published on it, and communicated it to their audiences. This clearly shows that Schwencke’s assertion that ‘ulama are absent from the discourse (Schwencke 2012, 57–58) is, from the relatively early stage, not true. This makes the significant differences vis-a-vis the „Western“ strand of the discourse even more interesting.

The first notable fact is that the localized discourse present at madrasas, specialized journals, and occasionally on Islam-focused TV channels exists largely as separated from the hitherto investigated milieu of globalized English-language Islamic environmentalism. Except for the temporary liaison with the activities of ARC, which, during the preparation of the 7 Year Muslim Action Plan, reached out to religious authorities from Middle Eastern countries and attempted to involve them in the realization of this rather unsuccessful project (see 4.2.2.b), the contacts have been relatively non-existent. The scholars from the Middle East have not associated with the civil society activists and ENGOs in the UK and US investigated above (5.1.1), nor with the debate that has evolved and proliferated in Western academia (see 6.1). Moreover, this ignorance seems to be mutual as the Western academicians and commentators of „Islamic ecotheology“ show little signs of awareness of the existence of the cognate field in the Arabic

---

<sup>139</sup> Ahmad bin Hamad al-Khalili was the high mufti of Oman at the time.

<sup>140</sup> Many other examples can be found via the internet.

language and do not include it in their accounts (see, e.g., 6.1.3.a) or attempt to interact with it. This points towards the existence of a discursive barrier and the existence of the “Western” and the “traditionalist” strands of the Islamic environmental discourse as virtually two separate “subcultures.”

This seclusion is, moreover, reflected in (but could be, conceivably also attributed to) the relative difference of some significant aspects of the discourse itself, which the analysis of al-Qaradawi’s work has already demonstrated. While the relatively large quantity of the literary production of scholars requires caution in terms of generalization, many of the specificities seem to be almost universally valid. In contrast to the syncretism and the tendency to “secularize” the Islamic response to the environment into the form of loose and flexible ethical commitments in the “Western” strands of the discourse, scholars with a traditional background tend to rely on Islam as a much more comprehensive and specific normative system, which is in their works presented as capable of covering the question of “the environment” in its entirety.

The man-environment relationship is thus typically in the first step described in terms of the integral “order of creation” (*nizām al-kawn* [cf. Shihata 2001, 14]) which is recounted in the Qur’an, preceding (in the “Bucailleist” manner; cf. 2.2.2b; 5.2.1.c) other descriptions, and is discussed extensively and in detail. The “environment” is thus understood in terms of the process of creation, the motion of celestial bodies, biological processes, or physical properties of matter (see Shihata 2001, 10–14) as a framework in which human life is situated with its typical order of sustenance, reproduction, devotion and interpersonal relations (15–20) occur. Such “descriptive” passages are also typically already interspersed with normative injunctions (the stress is being put on the preservation of the cosmic integrity established by the Divine wisdom), so no clear barrier between the “descriptive” and “prescriptive” exists (see again Shihata 2001, 10–20; Qaradawi 2001, 12–18). Characteristically, the very notion of the “environment” may be in this way extended beyond its typical understanding derived from ecology and focused on ecosystems, natural processes, or the flows of matter and energy to embrace a more abstract meaning of „outside“ or „conditions“ of any given being and may thus include „cultural,“ „educational,“ or „economical,“ environment, the influence of society on the individual, the

„environment“ of mother’s womb (Shirazi 2000, 11–16), rules of personal hygiene and housekeeping (Shihata 2001, 63–81) or may even embrace mythical creatures described in the scripture like jinns or angels (cf. Shihata 2001, 25–26). Apparently, such a “holistic” approach evades the much more restricted identification of religion as a source of general ethical values and injunctions.

Meanwhile, the more overt identification of environmental harms not only with the general moral failure but also with misdemeanor and “sin” in the direct religious sense, as well as the tendency to ascribe such “environmental evil” to irreligion or the religious or civilizational “other,” comprise other distinct features. While the first is signified by the much more frequent usage of the concept of *fasād* (“corruption”; see 2.2.2.i) to refer to environmental harms, the second can be registered in the discourse in various forms. So, for example, in his televised analysis of the question of the environment from the Islamic perspective, the former Grand Mufti of Egypt, ‘Ali Gum‘a, starts with a claim that “when *they* raised the question of the environment in the West, *they* did so after *they* spoiled this environment” (Gum‘a 2011, emphasis mine). In a book on environmental education written by an Iranian author, the developed world is similarly given the blame for the world’s environmental issues, citing their obsession with money and material values and “self-adornment” (Lafmejani, 24–25, 40). A similar insinuation of the West and „imperialism“ can also be found elsewhere (see, e.g., Javadi-Amoli 2016).<sup>141</sup>

While such insinuations are certainly not without *some* merit, it is worth pointing out their difference from other authors like Nasr ([1968] 1990; see also Manzoor 1984), who, while being critical of modernity and secularism, put more stress on analyzing its environmentally detrimental mechanisms and remain restrained in using an overt “identitarian” language. Arguably, these differences may be, to a large degree, ascribed to the varying social and cultural backgrounds. These have been shown to influence already Nasr’s pioneering pronouncement (i.e., by his anti-modernist view embedded in the Traditionalist school combined with his elite Western education; cf. 3.2.1) as well as institutionally-produced text (characteristic mainly by their form and stress on norm-setting; cf. 4.2) and the

---

<sup>141</sup> Such a politically instrumental usage of the theme may take still different forms: the Iraqi Shi‘i ayatollah Shirazi, for example, attacks Saddam Hussein’s regime by referring to the infamous incident of the mass poisoning by mercury via the consumption of contaminated grain in 1971 (2000, 89).

Islamic environmental activism located in the West (reflecting the secular as well as culturally and religiously diverse milieu; cf. 5.1.1.). Accordingly, the approach of the traditionally educated scholars reflects their scripturalist and legalist worldview conditioned by the rigid (if comparatively modernized from the past) environment of religious seminaries, madrasas and the at least partly centralized system of religious authority prevailing in the most of the investigated countries, as well as the “apologetic” tendency to focus in their preaching on strengthening the established forms of public piety and morality. This may also explain the prevalence of the „primordialist“ framing of the discourse (cf. 1.1.1.a; see also 6.1.3), which is, in these cases, even more pronounced than in others. I will return to these differences in tone, framing, and structure of the discourse in the final part of this chapter.

Lastly, there is an important question of the social impact of the scholarly discourse in its area of origin. As in the previous cases, this impact is not possible to gauge in a detailed or reliable way, but there are some clear indicators. First, it may be useful to mention that, ultimately, the role of the scholars (along with a few “laic” authors of non-religious background who, however, left the field) in the Middle Eastern context can be—at least to some degree—functionally equated to the role of whom we typically categorize as “activists” in the Western context. Like them, they, too, addressed the theme based on their own identification of the problem, independently on the pragmatic and political logic of the institutions, and through producing a discourse that possesses a mobilizational and moralizing character, aiming to become „opinion makers“ in their respective community on the given matter.

There are, however, a number of differences to be considered. First, neither of the analyzed authors adopted a strong version of the „environmentalist“ identity, devoting himself fully to the advocacy for the Islamic version of environmental activism. Instead, the scholars’ treatises on the topic, even if sometimes extensive in volume, became rather one-time contributions among their more comprehensive (and often prolific) literary production—and the same can be said about their thematization of the topic in public speeches or televised appearances. The overall circulation and outreach of their statements, books, and articles is another issue in question—few of the books quoted in this section seem

to be among „bestsellers,“ some cases are not widely available, and, overall, they comprise but a fraction of the vast amounts of the issued religious literature.

This may explain the fact that the scholarly commentaries on „Islam and the environment“ go virtually unnoticed among the broader community of researchers, and this includes even the studies actively searching for the signs of similar discourse in the Middle East or discussing the state therein (see Schwencke 2012, Vincenti 2017, Idllalène 2021, Karagiannis 2023).<sup>142</sup> Ultimately, this can be connected with arguably the most significant observation. Unlike in the Western milieu, the (relatively proficient) publishing activity of scholars seems to have failed to metamorphose into a broader, sustained bottom-up movement engaged in advocacy, popularization, association, and other activities for the sake of environmental conservation under the Islamic banner. Although it is difficult to completely disprove the existence of such phenomena, this can be judged at least by the absence of signs of the existence of such movement in media or literature—coherent with the already stated observation about the lack of the „Islamic environmental movement“ in the Middle East (see 4.3.3.; Vincenti 2017). The explanation of this significant fact will be sought below in the final part of this chapter (see 5.3.3.b).

To conclude, while the search for the Islamic tenets for sustainability has been shown to have penetrated the Islamic religious discourse within the Middle East and may have even become a part of its ethos through the thematization by both renowned religious authorities and scholars, the discourse, even if „activist“ and mobilizational in its intention, has remained academic in reality. It exists in separation and under the radar of other global „subcultures“ of Islamic environmentalism without apparent local influence in the form of social movements or policy changes. This, by itself, does not rule out that this knowledge of the potential of Islam to speak to environmental questions has influenced popular conscience or may play a role in the future, but as for now, it is sidelined and in a „standby “ mode.

---

<sup>142</sup> For example, al-Qaradawi’s volume on *Care for the Environment in the Islamic Shari’a* (2001) is not consulted in Karagiannis work (even though other pronouncements of the author are), and the broader volume of scholarly literature (including by the scholars unaffiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, which is among the main points of interest of his study) is not considered at all (cf Karagiannis 2023).

### **5.1.3 The Discourse of Outlaws: Islamists and Extremists on Islam and The Environment**

After going through the discourse present in the West and among traditionalist scholars in Muslim countries of the Middle East, I will now move toward another distinct case study. Pervading various Muslim subcultures around the globe, the core theme of modern environmental problems has, even if rather marginally, attracted also the interest of actors who are not ordinarily identified with a „progressive“ agenda of any kind but are known either for its radical ideology in terms of politics and, sometimes, armed and violent activities. To be sure, the adaptation of the discourse by radical actors—those who are typically referred to as „Islamists“ (even though the term may be too broad; see below) does not comprise, at least as of now, a sociologically significant factor. In fact, it will be argued that the Islamists (especially as far as the term is applied in a broader sense and embraces a multiplicity of movements) have not, to a significant extent, acquired an interest in environmental matters and even less so connected them directly with Islamic conceptual frameworks (the Islamic „code“). This, however, does not mean that it would not happen at all.

The adaptation of the discourse by Islamists, including by violent actors, ignored in many of the accounts of „Islam and the environment, “ comprises a valuable case by virtue of its specificity. It simultaneously demonstrates that the discourse may migrate and emerge within unexpected configurations and that it may take forms that are further heterogeneous to already demonstrated examples. Along with that, and especially given that the relevance of the theme of environmental crisis can be expected to grow, it may reveal a potential to be yet fulfilled in the future. In contrast to some other specific niches of the Islamic discourse on the environment (like the institutional discourse or the discourse of Islamic scholars), the liaison between Islamism has received scholarly attention, if by one author only—Emmanuel Karagiannis (see 2015; 2023). In this subsection, I will thus partly draw on his work. I will also attempt to complement it with some further observations drawn from the broader perspective applied on „Islam and the environment“ in this work. In the first part, I will begin with an example of the discourse and then move on to the general debate of the phenomena.

### 5.1.3.a *An Unexpected Actor: Osama bin Laden and Concerns for Climate Change*

As a distinct and rather extreme example of the adaptation of the discourse by Islamists, the case of arguably the most well-known Islamist organization may be used. Al-Qaeda changed the course of global history through the successful terrorist attack on the US on September 11, 2001, which elicited a broad political and military response and profoundly changed not only the relationship between the West and many Muslim countries but also the public perception of Islamism and even Islam globally. Founded in the late 1980s in the context of the armed insurgency against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, sponsored by a number of Western and Muslim countries, it morphed into a global clandestine militant network using methods of terror throughout the 1990s. At the time, it also adopted its comprehensive ideology focused on waging a “holy war” against the US and its affiliates, supposedly harming the interest of Muslims and the stature of Islam worldwide. This was also accompanied by a series of violent attacks against US assets in Africa and Saudi Arabia, and finally, the fateful attack on the World Trade Center in 2001, followed by a series of armed interventions vindicated by the aim of crushing the network and manhunt on its adherents throughout the following decade and beyond (see Kepel 2002, 299–322). For all these reasons, al-Qaeda and the personality of its leader, Osama bin Laden, could have been hardly expected to take part in the global conservationist efforts or have any relation to them whatsoever. Apparently, the question of the environment has not played any role in the establishment of the organization and its principal aims (focused from the outset on the armed struggle against the perceived enemies of Muslims) and in the transformation of its leader into the self-appointed herald of global jihad. Equally so, Bin Laden and his organization seem to possess no personal or institutional links to the broader assemblage of the Islamic environmentalism exposed above. Still, the theme of the environment ultimately penetrated into its ideology.

This happened first in 2002 in a pamphlet published on the internet in Arabic on October 14, 2002, under the title „Letter to the American People.“ In this letter, released approximately one year after the September 11 attacks, Bin



Laden attempted to vindicate his campaign of armed jihad against the US by extensively listing the „sins“ and wrongs perpetrated by it. While the first part of the pamphlet focuses on acts of aggression against Muslims, the second dissects the alleged corruption of American society. And it is also there, among denunciations of a wide variety of alleged, both to some degree plausible, and overtly fabricated misdemeanors and transgressions where the reference to the environmental issues appears:

You have destroyed nature [*dammartum ṭabī‘a*] with your industrial waste and gases, more than any other nation in history. Despite this, you refuse to sign the Kyoto agreement so that you can secure the profit of your greedy companies and industries (Bin Laden [2002] 2005, 168).

The inclusion of this paragraph may be seen as interesting for two reasons. First, it comprises certainly one of the more credible accusations raised in the proclamation. The great share of the US, as a major industrial nation (and producer of about one-third of global economic output throughout the greater part of the second half of the 20th century), on the global environmental harms is indisputable. Simultaneously, the observation about the refusal to sign the Kyoto Protocol and to partake in the early phase of the global climate policy is equally as right. This documents a measure of sophistry, demonstrated by an elementary orientation within the topic and the ability to recognize its validity to promote the given case. It may confirm the conjecture that the letter was composed by a group of al-Qaeda’s ideologues, able to draw on „arguments against the American state circulating widely in the West itself, in effect taunting the United States with not living up to its own rhetoric“ (Lawrence 2005, 185–186).

Second, the passage, despite its brevity and lack of knowledge about the process of its composition, enables us to make a relatively credible argument about Bin Laden’s (or other of its authors’) contact with the broader Islamic environmental discourse: it was probably nil. This is supported not only by the fact that there are no references or allusions to scriptural sources but also by the Arabic vocabulary used to describe the environmental destruction itself—instead of the Qur’anic root of F-S-D (*fasād, ifṣād*, i.e., „corruption“), almost universally recognized as highly relevant in Arabic texts due to its connection with morally reprehensible conduct (cf. 2.2.2.i), the root used is D-M-R (*dammartum, tadmīr*,

i.e. „destroyed,“ „destruction“). In other words, were the authors of the letter acquainted with the discourse on „Islam and the environment“ and the employment of the concept of *ifsād*, it seems unlikely that they would resist the temptation to use it. This points towards the fact that the use of this concrete accusation was completely instrumental and fully adapted, perhaps from the Western media sphere.<sup>143</sup>

This, however, makes the further engagement of al-Qaeda and Bin Laden himself in commenting on environmental topics even more interesting. This came some eight years later, with Bin Laden’s message explicitly devoted to the question of climate change, the transcript of which was published by Al-Jazeera Arabic in January 2010 (Bin Laden 2010).<sup>144</sup> The text shared some of its characteristics with the previously analyzed letter, namely that it manifests a level of knowledge about climate change (as well as the surrounding debate) and consciously uses it to blame the West and its economic and political institutions for misdeeds committed against Muslims. This, together with quotations from James Hansen (along with Noam Chomsky), provides Bin Laden’s pronouncement with a measure of seriousness and persuasiveness in addressing the question:

Talking about climate change is not an intellectual luxury, but rather a reality—notwithstanding the distortions spread by greedy owners of certain major companies. The effects of global warming have spread to all the continents of the world with drought, desertification, and sand dunes are spreading from one side, and from the other floods, torrential rains, and major hurricanes, which used to be seen only once in a few decades, but have become now a recurring phenomenon every few years; this all in addition to the islands that sink silently under the ocean in accelerating pace (Bin Ladin 2010).

Notably, in this case, Bin Laden also more extensively invokes religious discourse. The very beginning of the text, starting with reference to the creation and basic human responsibilities (worship and avoiding evil for good), includes the phrase „and he prohibited them from corrupting in the land and the sea [*al-fasād fi-l-barr wa-l baḥr*].” The same reference to the „corruption of the climate“

---

143 Looking at the state of the proliferation of the Islamic environmental discourse around 2000—the time in which al-Qaeda’s leaders were fully preoccupied with the preparation of their violent activities and lived in concealment—it also seems unlikely that they would come across it.

144 In the meantime, another Bin Laden communique repeated almost verbatim the 2002 statement focused on US refusal of the Kyoto protocol (see Karagiannis 2023, 164).

(*fasād al-munākh*; instead of the previous „destruction,“ *tadmīr*) and its identification with the „corruption of hearts and deeds“ (*fasād al-qulūb wa al-a‘māl*) also appears in what follows and concludes with a quotation of one of the central „environmental“ verses from the surat al-Rūm about the „corruption“ that „appeared on land and sea“ (30:41; see also 2.2.2.i ) and must be avoided as a first necessary step to forestall the crisis (Bin Laden 2010). Along with that, still, a second theme potentially bearing Qur’anic connotations appears, namely „avoiding extravagance“ (*al-tarf wa al-sarf*). However, Bin Laden, notably, does not use here the characteristic references to the Qur’anic *tabdhīr* and *isrāf* (cf. 2.2.2.i) explicitly.

In the rest of the text, further proposed responses to the climate crisis are, however, free of any connection of ecology or Islamic moral or legal norms and focus on the familiar agenda of al-Qaeda in the form of divesting from the dollar and exhorting others to continue or join jihad. Bin Laden thus seems not to be so much interested in the intricacies of the „eco-theological“ exegesis but focuses rather characteristically on the practical aims of the jihadist movement, which should, in this specific regard, disrupt the functioning of the global US-linked economy responsible for, among other things, the climatic „corruption“ (Bin Laden 2010). Moreover, neither this second expression provides unequivocal evidence of Bin Laden’s cognizance of the broader Islamic environmental *catechism* as, conceivably, the allusion to the “corruption on land and sea” may have popped up on his (or his fellow ideologues’) mind independently of that.

This raises a question about the motivation of addressing the ecological issue of climate by Bin Laden and al-Qaeda and its overall interpretation. In this regard, it may be essential to realize that the theme never played a singular and prominent role in al-Qaeda’s discourse and, as apparent from the debated examples, was always integrated with the wider agenda of the criticism of the US and, as pointed out by Karagiannis (2023, 165), criticism of capitalism and global economic system.

Still, the ability of the group to integrate the theme into their critique, together with a measure of appositeness of some of its components (in contrast to often rather confused views on economics and invoking of conspiratorial ideas, Bin Laden has the facts about climate change, including, e.g., its impact on

weather fluctuation and migration, roughly right), as well as the release of a separate message focused solely on the problem in 2010, may be seen as a proof of the fact, that the Saudi insurgent had a sincere interest in the matter. This fact may be further documented by a look into Bin Laden's personal correspondence obtained by the US military during the raid on his sanctuary in Abbottabad in Pakistan in May 2011. Of these, an untitled and undated draft of a letter addressed to „my Islamic nation“ (*ummatī al-muslima*) extensively focuses on the question of climate change, in this case in its concrete manifestations in the form of natural disasters (Bin Laden n.d.a).

Written apparently in August 2010 (as the beginning of Ramadan is mentioned in the opening), the letter comments upon catastrophic floods in Pakistan about a month earlier. The text attests to Bin Laden's close monitoring of the event taking place in his close vicinity and his interest in its impacts. Describing the calamity as „beyond description“ and „tragedy“ (*ma'sāt*), he pleads for intensive relief efforts to be taken to alleviate the suffering of „our Muslim brothers in Pakistan.“ At the same time, it also attempts to systematically connect the event with the broader framework of expected climate-related disasters and propose a list of mitigation measures. As such, the text provides a unique and valuable insight into Bin Laden's thinking about the problem. Interestingly, this seems to focus particularly on its „technical“ aspects. Assuming that disasters will become more frequent, Bin Laden lists as necessary measures the revision of urban planning to avoid residential compounds being built in valley paths as well as „examination and revision“ of dam and bridge safety regulations (2), prevention of famines that give „early warning a year or more prior to taking place“ and its negligence may result not only in mass deaths but also „malnutrition and some form of brain damage“ (ibid.), construction of river regulations for the sake of irrigation, safeguarding of food security in the form of investments in agriculture (ibid.), and prevention of the depletion of non-renewable aquifers (3). In what follows, Bin Laden also supplicates for mercy towards the victims of flooding and their admission to heaven and criticizes international relief organizations due to their non-Islamic nature and restriction imposed upon them „on terrorism grounds, “ with the preferable solution being the establishment of an „Islamic state“ (3).

Besides that, the letter also provides a rare insight into Bin Laden's theological and metaphysical understanding of the nature of climate change. Two, probably later-added footnotes (unfortunately, these are not preserved in the original Arabic version of the letter) express dissatisfaction with its wording, namely because it neglects the religious dimension, i.e., „what is stated in the Qur'an concerning these events [the climate change]“ and abstains from „warning that it is a plague or suffering from Allah Almighty, and the first solution is faith and correct deeds“ (Bin Laden n.d.a, 1).

This again points to the fact that Bin Laden was probably serious about his interest in the problem, although he apparently lacked either the capacity or theological sophistry to elaborate a consistent and comprehensive posture towards it. This overall assessment is further supported by passages from another undated letter addressed „to the kind brother, Sheykh Mahmoud, “ where Bin Laden ruminated about the medialization of the 10th anniversary of the September 11 attacks and, among the flow of haphazard ideas related to disparate problems notes:

Instead [of waging war against al-Qaeda], the world should put its efforts into attempting to reduce the release of [greenhouse] gases. The choice is with whoever is continuing to assault us. This is a struggle between two of the largest cultures on Earth, and it is in the shadow of catastrophic climatic conditions (Bin Laden n.d.b).

Together, the mentioned instances thus represent an adaptation of environmentalist discourse and its connection with Islam by Bin Laden as rather an unexpected actor, notorious for his global insurgent activities against the US and terrorist attacks with mass civilian casualties. While being rather a marginal part of Bin Laden's discourse, which was, moreover, as far as even registered by the wider conservationist community, denounced with abhorrence as an „unwelcome support“ (see Goldenberg 2010), it must be viewed as discursively important by exemplifying a still another possibility of the shape which the “Islamic” response to the environmental crisis may take. This does not comprise an attempt to „(re-)sacralise“ nature (cf. Karagiannis 2023, 196), devise a system of injunction and categories of environmental ethics, achieve a social change by moral appeal or education, constructively contribute to the universal environmental movement, and even not to document moral and normative

supremacy of Islam and exhort believers to align with orthodox version of faith. Instead, it is fully absorbed by the question of the *culprits* of the crisis, on the basis of which it argues for political and military strife against them, fitting into the broader militant vision of violent resistance against the US-dominated global order. It is thus an example of a potential *political weaponization* of environmental issues in the name of Islam. As it will be shown in what follows, it comprises rather a path that has not been taken in any significant manner but shall be treated seriously as one of the eventualities within the realm of the possible.

### 5.1.3.b *The Scope of the Islamist Engagement*

As already pointed out, the Issue of the intersection between environmentalist discourse and Islamist agendas, in distinction to many others surrounding the Islam-environment nexus, has not been left untouched. Specifically, the Islamist engagement with environmental topics has become a subject of research by Emmanuel Karagiannis, resulting in one of the rare publications focused on “Islam and the environment” from an empirical point of view, called *Why Islamist Go Green* (2023; see also 2015). In this book, Karagiannis closely analyses six Islamist subjects and movements representing a broader doctrinal and ideological spectrum, namely the Muslim Brotherhood, Hizb al-Tahrir, Hizbullah, Hamas, al-Qaeda, and ISIS (a marginal interest is also paid to Taliban).

Based on the analysis, Karagiannis argues that Islamist movements „have been increasingly preoccupied with environmental and environment-related themes“ (2023, 176). An example of such preoccupation has been, after all, analyzed above. But how far have the Islamists „gone green, “ and can it be viewed as an instance of the *Islamic environmental discourse* investigated in this dissertation? In fact, Karagiannis's account gives a more ambiguous picture than it would look from the name of the book.

First, the „environmental engagement“ the author speaks about and its „different scales“ that each group has adopted, „depending on its priorities and areas of operation“ (Karagiannis 2023, 176), covers a relatively broad and heterogeneous category of agendas. This includes addressing Nile water basin

politics by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, management of sewage and pollution by Hamas or Hizbullah on their respective controlled territories, al-Qaeda's and ISIS' vindication of attacking oil infrastructure, and largely theoretical and discursive production by Hizb al-Tahrir. Meanwhile, it should be noted that the book thus does not focus exclusively on the „green“ politics of Islamists (of which it can provide only limited and tentative evidence) but rather explores the general role of the environment and environmental categories in their politics. Equally so, it is not focused on environmental politics driven by Islamic or even just Islamist ideas and notions but effectively on any encounter of these groups with environmental phenomena whatsoever (in many cases involuntary, typically in situations when the given group controls a territory or becomes a political party required to address given agendas like water or sewage treatment).

The discourse of the concerned groups, as shown, certainly involves some allusions known from the broader Islamic environmental discourse. For example, among Hizbullah, Karagiannis documents usage of familiar tropes derived from *hadith* used to enhance their reforestation projects, rendering tree-planting a *sadaqa* (charity) on the part of those who plant them (2023, 111–112; see also 2.2.2.j, 2.2.2.k).<sup>145</sup> Equally as well, allusions to religious normativity may occasionally appear in the discourse of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (e.g., by mobilizing the term of *tahāra*, „purity“; 65–66), Hamas (again in relation to trees; cf. 139–142), or, as it has been evidenced, al-Qaeda (see 5.2.3.a; see also Karagiannis 2023, 168–170). But in sum, the framings of environmental agenda, as far as it is present, seem to lean decisively towards different frameworks (technical, scientific, nationalistic, security-based, or even military; cf., e.g., 65–65, 142, 168–170).<sup>146</sup> This holds with the exception of only one group, Hizb ut-Tahrir (incidentally also the one which has not a history of direct participation in politics and has not controlled territory or institutions), which has in some instances produced more elaborate visions of „Islamic environmental order“ that

---

145 Similar allusions have been in isolated cases used by the Taliban (see IEA n.d.a; IEA n.d.b).

146 Ironically, ISIS has in this regard produced fatwas permitting „ecological warfare“ in the form of cutting trees and destroying crops, contrary to the widespread opinion among Islamic environmentalists who typically cite prohibition of such practice as evidence of the progressive pro-environmental nature of Islam as a religion (Karagiannis 2023, 162). From a different side, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood focused on water policy from the Egyptian nationalistic perspective (i.e., obviously to water scarcity affecting global societies or even just the umma as a whole [ cf. 176–177]).

would guide environmental management in the envisioned structure of the future Islamic caliphate (see Hizb al-Tahrir 2009; Karagiannis 2023, 73–93).

Per Karagiannis' assessment and in concord with still other observations (see Yildirim 2016), the „Islamist environmentalists“ (as far as this concept is even appropriate), thus, „rarely provide sophisticated insights into Islamic eco-theology [...] do not refer to Islamic theosophy (the nature of divinity), cosmology (the origin of the universe) or ontology (the nature of mankind),“ which the author himself finds „puzzling“ (ibid., 179). More practically:

The Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas want to offer solutions to problems that matter. Religious knowledge does not make a difference in this case. Hizb ut-Tahrir's environmentalism seeks some theological guidance in its effort to deal with ecological issues. Hizbullah's environmentalism incorporates a few religious and many non-religious elements. Al-Qaeda's and ISIS's approach to the environment is as simply another tool in their military toolkit (ibid., 180)<sup>147</sup>

Viewed from a broader historical perspective, the Islamist political movements, even though drawing on Islam as the main and decisive component of their political ideology and doctrine, have not adopted environmental conservation and protection as a visible and strong part of their identity and even less so incorporated the tropes of the more broadly used Islamic environmental catechism into their teachings. Therefore, even though Islamist movements represent a vigorous *moral* (while also political) *response* to perceived unjust political order, secularism, imperialism, authoritarianism, and like, they have not embraced a similar *moral response* to ecological crisis and have not identified it as a core part of either local and regional or global social, political and economic agenda. While promising social justice or liberation as an outcome of their political engagement and of the envisioned Islamic politics, they (perhaps with the exception of Hizb al-Tahrir) do not promise, with a nearly comparable level of focus and vigor, bringing about a solution to environmental problems and perils, either locally or globally. The environmentally sound state and society have not been thus a significant part of their political ideal and utopia and much less a model or paradigm for the rest of the world. Remarkably, the overall account also lacks

<sup>147</sup> Contrary to this assessment, however, the issue of the climate change has been shown to comprise rather an authentic point of interest on the part of Osama bin Laden, feeding not only into his anti-Americanism but also arousing sentiments of charity and stirring plans for the provision of relief.



examples where the environmental ethics, norms, and injunctions of Islam would be, in any extensive manner, used for apologetic purposes as a signifier of the perfection of Islam, its law, and morality. This is regardless of the apparent potential of the connection (demonstrated by the cases where it is tentatively established) and even its immediate practical relevance stemming from the real environmental problems encountered by the groups active in policy-making and governance.

Arguably, there are two possible explanations for this fact. The first one is that the environment is, in fact, low on the list of Islamist actors' priorities and is, except for individual cases (like, e.g., that of Osama bin Laden), not perceived as a religiously important issue or an issue expected to be addressed by the movements' constituencies. This is, after all, at least partly understandable, as the studied movements are typically absorbed by a sharpened socio-political strife, which renders environmental issues (at least seemingly) of secondary importance. In such a situation, the Islamist movements' leaders have little motivation to immerse in the intricacies of environmental politics and related moral questions and struggle to devise sophisticated eco-theological answers (or, for that matter, adopt them from the outside).

The second explanation (that is not mutually exclusive) may then be that the Islamist actors, and especially those actively engaged in governance or policy, find Islam-environment connection inexpedient for their political agendas and purposes, and this is even in the cases where they confront real environmental problems. This correlates with the fact that they often tackle these problems by following „secular“ categories and norms and approach them in technical and managerial ways. In this regard, the majority of Islamist actors may be compared to the majority of Muslim countries that, equally, have embraced the Islamic-environmental injunctions only occasionally and marginally in their statements and have reneged on them in the everyday real-world policy over the long term, sticking to non-religious „secular“ legal and political frameworks. As such, the Islamists may be counted among other already identified actors, who could be potentially expected to adopt and promote „Islamic environmentalism“ but who, even though having experimented with it, have not opted to do so. This fact must be viewed as a significant context for the strong and overtly optimistic claims

about the natural and vital positive role of Islam in tackling global environmental problems. It also further stresses the necessity to view the „environmentalist“ interpretations of Islam as a socially constructed and contingent phenomenon<sup>148</sup> that does not automatically spring from the Islamic tradition and the scriptures but must be actively developed and accepted through a particular reading of the shared Islamic „code“—which may or may not occur. On the other side, the same constructed nature may lead to different expressions and adaptations, some of which may not be perceived as legitimate, efficient, moral, or even religiously sound—which is another lesson that the limited experimentation of the Islamists with the environmental discourse provides.

Lastly, it is still important to point out that the fact that these interpretations have not been hitherto largely adopted and incorporated into Islamist politics must not be seen as definitive. In fact, the evidence that some of the interest on the part of these actors occurred may signify a potential for the connection to be established in the future. Conceivably, such a scenario may become more probable with the expected growing severity of the impacts of climate change, not least on Muslim countries (some of which will be impacted disproportionately [cf. Ali et al. 2022]), raising the demand for the steps toward mitigation, adaptation, but also litigation for potential compensations—not even mentioning the potential apocalyptic dimension of such impacts. The generational change—as most of the current Islamist groups’ elites have been still socialized in the period in which environmental problems played a marginal role and were not perceived with the measure of existential urgency as they are now—may also affect the situation and lead to an enhanced prominence of environmental topics among Islamist groups. If this scenario materializes, the already available evidence indicates that such adaptation would probably result in a different disposition of the Islamist-environmentalist identity and a different overall tone of the related messages, probably far from those encountered among the Western diasporas and academia. Certainly, in such a case, the theme of Islam-environment intersection would also finally find its prominence within the fields of Islamic and Middle-Eastern studies.

---

<sup>148</sup> This is also, incidentally, an issue that Karagiannis omits, as he subscribes (remarkably) to the „primordialist“ understanding of Islam and takes the fact that „the Muslim faith is oriented towards conservation and protection of the environment“ as granted (see 2023, 18; see also *ibid.*, 18–45).

#### **5.1.4 Close and Distant Lands: Indonesia and Other Global Spaces of Proliferation of Muslim Environmental Identities**

After covering three particular „subcultures“ of Islamic environmentalism arising from its initial phase, comprising the activism within the Muslim diasporas in the West, the discursive production of the Arabic and Persian-speaking conservative scholars in the Middle East, and the rather ambiguous and marginal engagement of Islamists, it is necessary to thematize yet another area, without the consideration of which the aim of this study to provide at least a tentatively comprehensive account of „Islam and the environment“ could not be fulfilled. This is the case of Indonesia, which has become a space of a veritable spread of the Islamic environmental discourse, which has also been relatively extensively covered in scholarly literature, although usually in separation from other strands of “eco-Islam.” This literature will also be my main source, given the lack of my own original research in the area as well as the language barrier which prevents me from accessing the primary sources. Within this analysis, I will attempt to juxtapose the available information to other case studies within this dissertation, incorporate them into the broader historical and social landscape of Islamic environmental discourse, and assess to what degree and in which way it is a part of this broader assemblage. Finally, in the last part of the section, I will briefly address what may be, in the geopolitical parlance, called the „rest,“ i.e., the other areas of the world that do not figure prominently in the discussions of “Islam and the environment” and the presence of the discourse therein poses a question. These will include many parts of the Muslim world that have not produced reliable accounts of the existence of Islamic environmentalism, or the evidence is rather ambiguous. I will review the limited amount of sources and literature coming from these regions, demonstrate some further peculiarities of the global eco-Islamic assemblage through them, and discuss the potential of further research.

As such, this section should further add to the documentation of plurality and diversity and de facto globality into which the Islamic-environmentalist discourse has evolved as well as the importance of the aspect of identity in it. The

observations will be utilized in theoretical discussion in the final part of this chapter (5.2).

#### 5.1.4.a *The Landscape of Islamic Environmentalism in Indonesia*

In covering the origins of the Islamic environmental discourse, it would comprise a serious omission to overlook the case of Indonesia, which constitutes one of the central geographical areas where this discourse proliferates and seems to have had comparatively significant impact within society while also acquiring specific local characteristics. The theme of Indonesian Islamic environmentalism has been relatively widely reflected upon in literature from a number of perspectives a selection of which I will also use as my main source (see Gade 2012; 2015; Mangunjaya and McKay 2012; Reuter 2015; Dewayanti and Saat 2020; Herdiansyah, Jokopitoyo and Munir 2016; Nilan 2021; Anabarja and Mubah 2021; Grossman 2019; Fikri and Colombijn 2021; Bagir, Northcott and Wijzen ed. 2021). Indonesia also has been the key case upon which Anna Gade, one of few authors who extensively focused on Islam and the environment in her scientific work and devoted to the topic a book-length publication, grounded her comprehensive interpretation (see Gade 2019), which will be discussed in the next chapter (6.2.2.a).

At the beginning, it is useful to briefly mention the specificity of Indonesia from the environmental perspective. Comprising a mountainous archipelago with a tropical climate, the relatively large and populous country must be seen as an ecologically important region. With a variety of ecosystems and vast rainforests, it is one of the main sites for the concentration of biodiversity globally. At the same time, the country has also been threatened by the impact of ecological problems caused by population growth, urbanization, industrialization, and the spread of extractive industries like logging, mining, or intensive cultivation of export crops. This has, especially over the last two decades, led to the increased relevance of environmental conservation and preservation, which is now promoted in the country both locally and internationally, where Indonesia is perceived as one of the main theaters of the fight against the ecological crisis (see Mangunjaya and McKay 2012, 292–293; Smith 2017, 210).

The Islamic environmental discourse may be viewed within the context of these efforts. It has acquired a visible presence and started to proliferate in Indonesia relatively recently, approximately in the period after 2000. This coincides also with other cases discussed in this chapter (I will yet return to the discussion of the origins of the discourse below). Since then, it seems to have progressively evolved into a sustained phenomenon, which possesses characteristics of both discourse and movement animated by the participation of different social actors and influencing to varying (and sometimes disputed) degrees the local religious cultures as well as the practices on the ground.

Overall, scholars covering the topic agree that the connection between environmental issues and Islam can be traced in Indonesia back to the 1990s, and it seems to have taken (not unlike in other cases) first a discursive form of statements issued by various actors. Though earlier examples may exist (see also below), Gade cites in this regard the report *Islam Dan Lingkungan Hindup (Islam and the Environment)* published in 1997 by the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Religion, and the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI)<sup>149</sup> as a first document on this issue (2015, 165–166). The publication was followed by further activity of its kind, with two conferences in West Java in 2003 producing the first legal opinion, *fatwa*, by religious scholars (*kiyai*), prohibiting the environmentally harmful practice (Gade 2012, 266) and also a document titled "The Concept of Islamic Law of the Environment" (*Menggagas Fiqh Lingkungan*) (Mangunjaya and McKay 2012, 297). As it may be evidenced, the local religious establishment thus played from the outset a central role in the proliferation of the discourse, represented by scholars and national religious associations and networks—MUI was later joined by Nahdatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah (cf. Gade 2012, 264)—even if also, as it will be yet discussed, transnational organizations and ENGOs.

This activity subsequently proceeded to another significant and locally specific trend. This comprised the engagement of local Islamic boarding schools, *pesantren*, and their teachers, *kiai* (both were already involved in the pioneering production of the discourse; cf. Gade, 266–267). Throughout the 2000s, *pesantren*

---

<sup>149</sup> This thus happened still under Suharto's authoritarian regime. Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) was established in 1975. Officially autonomous from the government, it was rather closely aligned with Suharto's regime till 1998, but since then progressively drifted towards an independent agenda.

incorporated environmental values transmitted through Islamic concepts into their curricula, being designated as „*eco-pesantren*. “ Most students of Indonesian Islamic environmentalism quote their emergence as a major achievement of the movement (Mangunjaya and McKay 2012, 297–305; Gade 2012, 270–275). The *eco-pesantren* became not only vehicles for the dissemination of Islamic environmentalism through educational activity but also engaged in direct conservation- and sustainability-related projects targeting broader communities. These have included the planting of trees and reforestation projects (Mangunjaya and McKay 2012, 296–297), community clean-ups, recycling water for ablution, and still other conservation activities (Mangunjaya and McKay 2012, 300–302; Gade 2012, 272).

At the same time, this localized activism has been complemented by the further activity of other national and transnational organizations, contributing to the further popularization and dissemination of the discourse as well as the activities on the ground. These included issuing publications to formalize the curriculum of *eco-pesantren*, other training activities and workshops, and conferences supported by local groups, the government, as well as institutions like World Bank, Maarif Institute, IFEES, ARC and British Council (cf. Mangunjaya and McKay 2012, 295–303). On their own part, the national Islamic associations of MUI and NU continued to issue fatwas prohibiting environmental harm, including in concrete respects like logging, mining, and use of toxic chemicals (Gade 2015, 165, see also 166–172; Mangunjaya and McKay 2012, 302–303). Apparently, the movement also progressively acquired a broader popular presence, with particular quotes from the Qur’an appearing on blogs and even finding their way to T-shirts (Reuter 2015, 1223). Another force of the promotion of the discourse became the academia, with a number of scholars with “secular” education background theorizing the relationship between Islam and the environment (among them also one of the quoted chroniclers of the movement, Fachruddin Mangunjaya [see 2010a]) and the theme finding its way into academic journals. Through this channel, works of Western Muslim environmentalists like S. H. Nasr also found their way to the Indonesian audience (see, e.g., Widiyanto 2016).

Together, these activities and initiatives have constituted the backbone of Islamic environmentalism in Indonesia, presented by many (though not by all; see below) authors as a vivid and expanding movement. It is in relation to these basic contours that further questions can be posed regarding the distinct characteristics of the phenomena as well as its relationship to other strands of Islamic discourse on the environment in other places. These may concern the actual structure of the discourse of the movement, the questions of its origins, the time frame of its development, its scale, and eventually its position in the broader society and social impact. I will attempt to answer them through a closer analysis of scholarly accounts, debates, and explanations surrounding the phenomena.

#### 5.1.4.b *Between Locality and Globality*

As also the rest of this work focused closely on the area of discourse, the discursive structures of Indonesian Islamic environmentalism may be the first area worth investigating. Studies by Mangunjaya and McKay (2012), Reuter (2015), and especially Gade (2012; 2015) provide relatively rich information about the overall shape of the discourse. As mentioned, this has been produced primarily by religious scholars (*ulama* and *kiai*), albeit in cooperation with other actors. Drawing on the analyses of a variety of statements (books and fatwas) issued especially throughout the 2000s, it seems clear that their basic composition resembles what has been encountered in other contexts. Namely, it comprises the exposition of a given environmental problem (or the field of ecology as a whole) from the practical (and potentially also scientific) viewpoint, to which a religious opinion is subsequently given in more or less categorical manner, supported by scriptural quotes and legal or moral reasoning (see particularly Gade 2015, 164–178).

As multiple authors attest, this discourse employs essentially the whole register of the already encountered motives. These include the major themes derived from the Qur'an like reasoning about the natural world in terms of creation and God's unity (*tawhīd*), responsibility and stewardship (*khilāfa*), balance (*mīzān*), innate nature of the creation (otherwise signified mainly by the concept of *fiṭra*, but in this case transmitted as *sunnat Allah*, "God's habit" [Gade

2012, 276]), as well as the framing of environmental harms in terms of corruption, *ifsād* (Mangunjaya and McKay 2011, 292; Gade 2012, 266, 284; Gade 2015). Scriptural sources are then equally as well used to thematize relationships to various elements of the environment like earth, trees, or water (Gade 2012, 269). In the latter case, the references to water and trees in *hadith* are commonly used, such as those which stress the divine rewards for planting trees (Gade 2012, 279) and the importance of the preservation of clean water related to, among other things, Islamic ritual practice in the form of ablution and prayer (Gade 2012, 273–274; see also Reuter 2015, 1223). Furthermore, traditional legal concepts and institutions, particularly that of *himā* and *ḥarīm* (see 2.2.2.k), are widely mentioned, having been implemented into practice, even though they seem not to be indigenous to the Indonesian context (Mangunjaya and McKay 2012, 298–300; Gade 2012, 266–267; Reuter 2015, 1223).<sup>150</sup> All of these motives are clearly consistent with the *generic* forms of Islamic environmental discourse as signified by the broader shared catechism, also known from the other contexts. At the same time, the local Indonesian discourse may also involve some specificities.

Some of these seem to be tied to the local ritual practices, such as incorporating environmental themes into *dhikr* (uttering God’s name, characteristic of Sufi practice) or *salawat* (the locally specific practice of singing devotional songs in Arabic) (Gade 2012, 278, 280–281). Still, other specificities point to a measure of difference, especially from the Western activist discourses, and may relate to a more institutionalized religiosity influenced by the traditionally educated authorities. This concerns especially the employment of legal constructs derived from *fiqh*, such as *maṣlaḥa* and *maqāṣid al-sharī‘a* (both referring to the loose notion of common good [see Gade 2015, 165–168, 174; see also 2.2.2.k]) and the overall formalization of the discourse through legal categories (including prohibitions and incriminations; Gade 2015, 171–172). Another specificity is the reported widespread use of the term *dakhwa* (“appeal,” “mission,” or „outreach, “an equivalent of Arabic *da‘wa*) used to frame the overall effort of environmental „proselytization“ (cf. Gade 2012, 264; 2015, 176–177). Apparently (and as it is stressed especially by Gade’s account), more attention, notably in comparison with the Western and academic discourses, is paid to the

---

<sup>150</sup> As the quoted authors note, this happened through systematic effort from above, supported by international ENGOs, including IFEES and Care International.



motive of divine punishment for sins and the notion of the afterlife (Gade 2012, 281–283). These motives resemble the more traditionalist-leaning discourses like that of al-Qaradawi (see 5.1.2). Gade and other authors also document the incorporation of the concept of tradition, *tradisi*, i.e., not necessarily Islamic, but local tradition, and its apparent meshing with the Islamic environmental discourse (Gade 2012, 277–278; Reuter 2015, 1220–1221; Smith 2017, 220). I will yet return to this question again while discussing the question of identity and interrelationship between religious, secular, and local cultures.

Finally, there seems to be another important characteristic, which is common with many other instances investigated in this dissertation. As registered again especially by Gade (whose account is the most sensitive towards discursive intricacies), this consists of the belief not only in the adequacy of the Islamic moral and legal tenets for addressing the ecological crisis but, in many cases also in their primacy and indispensability:

Islamic law of the environment is expected compellingly and uniquely to address directly a moral crisis, thereby providing the most effective and only lasting solution to the environmental crisis (Gade 2015, 164).

As it may be evidenced, Gade attributes this notion to the specific way of addressing the ecological crisis as a moral crisis, supposedly unique to the Indonesian Islamic environmental discourse:

In Indonesia [...] there is a tendency for religious perspectives on the environment to focus on notions of social harm and betterment (rather than, in Guha’s comparative discussion, a typical North American picture of a pristine „wilderness“ in which no people appear). Such Islamic treatments in Indonesia tend to have two related features. First, Muslims readily cast treatments of environmental justice in terms of moral conduct, even as environmental science and social and political structures are clearly acknowledged. Second, moral matters tend to prevail over others in religious treatments of environmentalism overall (Gade 2015, 169; see also *ibid.* 164, 271; 2012, 279; Mangunjaya and McKay 2012, 303).

Elsewhere, Gade observes a closely related specificity, the saliency of “sentiment,” i.e., a deep emotional engagement with nature and the environment in the light of faith, as the impetus animating the Indonesian Islamic environmentalism (2012, 267, 269, 275). While treated by Gade as specific, the twin forces of moral engagement and personal appeal have been traced as one of

the most persistent and universal characteristics of the Islamic environmental discourse in this work (see also 3.3.2). One of the statements issued by Nahdatul Ulama in this regard employs a typical juxtaposition of religious morality with moral decadence stemming from individualism, loss of authenticity, consumerism, and globalization (see Gade 2015, 170). As such, Islamic legality and morality are also, in other instances, viewed as a remedy to the inept (and potentially even corrupt) institutions of the state (ibid., 172). This reflects another characteristic feature of the polemic of the veracious religious understanding of nature and ecology with the purportedly inadequate or less valid understanding coming from the „secular“ sphere, which can be, too, traced to the very beginning of the discourse and has been registered in various contexts. This signifies what will be shortly discussed as the *apologetic* dimension of the discourse that may also influence its interaction with other social assemblages and is important for the sociological understanding of its broader role.

Overall, discursively, Indonesian Islamic environmentalism bears strong signs of homogeneity with the discourses elsewhere, even if also apparently enriching it with features that reflect the local tradition. Upon this basis, it is possible to proceed with further questions. The first one may be that of the origin of the discourse and the movement and its direct institutional and ideational links to other parts of the „Islamic environmental assemblage. “

As shown above, the Islamic environmental discourse in Indonesia not only shares many of its concepts with the other, previously investigated areas, but its emergence may also be traced back to the same period. This, by itself, strongly supports the view that the discourse, in one way or another, mirrors wider global shifts and processes. As it has been shown, the efforts to institutionally promote the connection between “Islam and the environment” started in the 1980s (4.2.1) and gained pace in the 1990s, with the establishment of ARC in 1996, adoption of the discourse by some states and engagement of other, independent actors (see 4.2.2.; 4.2.3). As for Indonesia, there seems to be a virtual agreement that it was only in the 2000s that the discourse began to have a tangible impact on society. In this regard, Gade states that “full-scale Muslim ecological religious preaching was only just beginning to emerge during the period of my visits in 2010” (2012, 264). Especially in the period before 2000, the discourse seems to be present only in

isolated statements, like the publication issued by NUI in 1997 (Gade 2015, 165–166) and a fatwa against environmental pollution from 1994 (Gade 2015, 171).<sup>151</sup> In this regard, the story of one of the central personalities of the Indonesian Islamic conservation scene, Fachruddin Mangunjaya, may be illustrative:

It was 1991. Fachruddin Mangunjaya was in his early 20s and had recently started his first conservation job with WWF-Indonesia in Jakarta. He was looking through a filing cabinet for some background papers when the label on one of the folders caught his eye. It said “RELIGIONS AND CONSERVATION.” He was curious: he had never thought the two things were connected enough to have a folder for them. When he opened the folder there was just one document inside. That document would change his life. It would also save the lives of many endangered animals. The document was The Assisi Declarations (ARC 2019)

The story, embracing obviously a personal account (supported by the fact that it has been put on Mangunjaya’s own website [see Mangunjaya n.d.]), is certainly remarkable as it gives us insight into a moment where there may well not have been almost any connection between religion and conservation in Indonesia (signified by the curiosity of the later eminent activist as well as the emptiness of the folder of the organization actively pursuing the agenda at the time). It thus strongly points towards its introduction throughout the following period. Who were the implicated actors?

Among researchers, especially Gade tends to paint the movement as emerging spontaneously and organically from the local religious culture,<sup>152</sup> stating that “in these modes of preaching, teaching and example [i.e., within the local Islamic environmental discourse], traditional ideas in mainstream Indonesian Islam and Muslim religious ‘culture’ were recast as environmental discourses, and vice-versa” (Gade 2012, 264). This is signified by the practice wherein “some *kiai* (religious teachers and preachers) were self-consciously developing materials for public outreach” (ibid.). Equally, the effort to establish eco-pesantrens is presented as “re-casting of old patterns and practices that have long existed, especially with respect to the relationship shared by these institutions with the agricultural communities that usually surround them.” (270). Still, even Gade also registers

---

<sup>151</sup> This is if we do not count an alleged publication activity of the former rector of National Islamic University in Jogjakarta, Amin Abdullah, already in the 1970s (of which, however, no concrete examples are quoted; Gade 2012, 272) there seems to be little or none.

<sup>152</sup> See also the discussion of Gade’s general account of Islamic environmentalism (2019) in the following chapter (INREF6).

the influence of international ENGOs and other institutions like World Bank (265–266) or The Climate Project Indonesia (268). Additional information on these “outer” influences and significant links especially to the institutional discourse is provided by other accounts. In this regard, Mangunjaya and McKay for example document the relatively extensive activity and influence of Fazlun Khalid and IFEES (see 5.1.1.a) in Indonesia, including in collaboration with Mangunjaya himself, who led “various workshops in Indonesia including Aceh, Padang, Mandailing Natal, North Sumatra, Bogor, Bandung, Cirebon, West Java and Waigeo Island, Papua” with hundreds of attendees among scholars, imams and teachers (Mangunjaya and McKay 2012, 291–292). ARC seems to be another significant actor with a long-term interest in promoting Islamic environmentalism in the country, claiming credit for its activities through a long list of supported initiatives on its webpage (where also the above-mentioned story of Mangunjaya figures [ARC 2019]) Among these was also the Muslim 7 Years Action Plan that brought mediocre results elsewhere (see 4.2.2.a) but seems to have had comparatively bigger influence in Indonesia, not least through the already mentioned conference in Bogor in 2010 (Mangunjaya and McKay 2012, 295–296). The activity of the international ENGOs contributed to the release of several publications like *Fiqh al-Bi‘ah / Fiqih Lingkungan (Islamic Environmental Law)* authored by local scholars and called “influential” by Gade, issued by Conservation International with support from World Bank in 2006 (2015, 166). Mangunjaya and McKay map the engagement of still other organizations like UNEP, the British Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, universities, charities, and others (2012, 299–300; see also, e.g., Wijzen and Saptaningtyas 2021). From yet a different side, the proliferation of the discourse (and especially its transition towards on-the-ground impacts) seems to be embedded in a couple of broader political and social developments in the country. These were signified by the 2007 COP13 meeting, which took place in Bali and which was also imbued with religious-environmentalist messaging, with representatives of the six major faith groups in the country invited to articulate a common statement on the environment (Smith, 213–214). In a close sequence, in 2009, the Indonesian government introduced new statutory laws for environmental protection (Mangunjaya and McKay 2012, 294) and supported the

national program to facilitate the establishment of *eco-pesantrens* via the Indonesian Ministry of Environment (Gade 2012, 269; Mangunjaya and McKay 2012, 297).

Connecting this information with the already mapped structures of proliferation and promotion of the Islamic environmental discourse internationally (starting with the IUCN and WWF-related activities in the 1980s), it seems clear that the ascent of Islamic environmental activism in Indonesia can be at least in part (and perhaps to an unnegligible degree) ascribed to their influence and deemed thus a part of the global, interconnected assemblage. This observation is certainly important for answering the general questions posed in this dissertation. Sociologically, it provides us with further insight into discursive flows that took part in the „making“ of Islamic environmentalism globally and contributes thus to the proper understanding and explanation of its various local strands and manifestations and their role within respective social contexts for which the broader comparative perspective may be vital. Needless to say, this, at the same time, does not diminish the value or achievements of Indonesian Islamic environmentalism or the agency of local actors. To observe the influence of internationally-sponsored activities in the country does not rule out the spontaneous emergence of Islamic „eco-theological“ discourses locally and, above all, cannot obscure the most important fact: that the Islamic environmental discourse (whatever its origin) seems to have found particularly fertile ground in the country, being readily accepted and further developed by local national religious bodies as well as by local groups and individual actors, who imbued the movement with many specificities (some of which have been already mentioned). Finally, it is useful to note that the interconnection between Indonesian Islam and the global assemblage of the Islamic environmental discourse has, at the same time, not been a one-directional highway. Aside from hosting global meetings (like the Bogor conference in 2010) and providing it with impetus (Smith 2017, 219), several Indonesian activists, including Fachruddin Mangunjaya and Nina Farman, personally joined the global networks and participated in initiatives launched from other places—most significantly the release of the IFEES-initiated Muslim Declaration on Global Climate Change (Smith 2017, 215–216, 219). This all substantiates Smith’s analysis of the religious environmental movement in

Indonesia (via the example of Islam) as standing on the middle ground between local and global (2017) and a similar explanation in terms of the globalization of religion utilized by Gade (2015).

#### 5.1.4.c *Identity and Role in Society*

This description arguably provides a fairly basic picture of Islamic environmentalism in Indonesia, especially in terms of discourse and involved actors. Still other questions, though, remain. These may concern especially its scale and outreach, but also its inner diversity and position within the broader social, political, and cultural landscape in the country, not least in relation to other religious cultures and other forms of environmental activism that may not identify with Islam or religion as such. Obviously, these are vital for further assessing the character of the Indonesian „eco-Islam“ as a social movement and its potential for broader social impact and significance.

In this regard, it is useful to note that a number of studies, which have been extensively quoted above, including those of Mangunjaya and McKay (2012) and Gade (2012; 2015), do not give sufficient insight into these issues. This may be partly ascribed to their rather single-minded focus on the Islamic environmental discourse and movement and its inner discursive and organizational structures, which are generally assessed positively (some authors even partly acknowledge possible skewing towards positive examples [see Mangunjaya and McKay, 303]). The eventual picture (regardless of whether intended by the authors or not) may then be one of a unified, growing, and prospective movement possessing a fair measure of social influence and being active in the effective spread of environmental conscience and ecologically sound practices across the country in a way that may, to exemplify this optimism, „soon prove to be a model for the global Muslim world“ (Mangunjaya and McKay 2012, 303).<sup>153</sup> This notion of Islamic environmental discourse as existing outside of the realm of social and political conflicts, as well as the ambiguities, disagreements,

<sup>153</sup>In contrast to Mangunjaya and McKay (2012), Gade is less explicit in terms of her expectations and positive assessments of the phenomena but tends to stress its constructive and unproblematic aspects nevertheless (see 2012; 2015). This culminates in her later book on *Muslim Environmentalisms* (2019), where he pits the „authentic“ versions of Islamic environmentalist engagement against purportedly less effective and adequate secularist ones (see INREF).

and controversies that usually accompany the mobilization of religion and religious identity in the public sphere (already evidenced in other instances throughout this work), can be, however, misleading.

To demonstrate the relevance of these overlooked links and issues, a couple of observations made by Reuter (2015), based on his own field research in the country, may prove illustrative. Crucially, Reuter suggests a broader register of mechanisms and motivations to be in play among Indonesian Muslims and Islamic religious authorities in embracing the “eco-theological” themes, ones which are typically not considered by other sources focused solely on the role of the Islamic discourse. These include, in the first place, the general public opinion on ecology, marked by the knowledge and acceptance of the notion of ecological crisis and the necessity to avert it:

Most Indonesian Muslims tend to accept ecology as an uncontroversial and fairly self-evident scientific idea, indicating a condition of human interdependence within nature. The urgent need for political action is also widely seen as self-evident, given that most Indonesians have some knowledge of the devastation of tropical forest environments on Sumatra and Borneo at the hands of the mining and palm oil industries and of the extreme environmental pollution issues now plaguing the capital Jakarta and other urban areas (Reuter 2015, 1222).

In this sense, Reuter also speaks about religious authorities and ordinary Muslims not giving “resistance” to environmental thought (1222) and notices that even Muslim conservatives, who may otherwise hinder the interfaith cooperation in the area of socio-economical issues, accept the eco-theological discourse and even embrace it (not least as a part the overall trend of addressing contemporary issues in sermons and other religious statements; 1221–1222). Reuter argues that engaging with environmentalist groups is considered by young Indonesian Muslims “a very safe way of projecting a self-image of being a progressive, contemporary and open-minded person” (1223) and points out the collaboration and mutual support between Muslim and secular environmentalists during engagement in conflicts with industries or government (1222–1223). Finally, his reflection also includes an important question of the relationship to other faiths and traditions, which the Australian scholar views rather ambiguously. Reuter stresses the role of the Indigenous religious traditions of Indonesia, which may

lack official status of religion and hide behind the formal allegiance to Islam (or other monotheist traditions) as a vital factor for embracing „eco-spiritual“ values more easily (1221, 1227), while also indicating possible tensions that may arise from religious differences: followers of indigenous and non-monotheistic traditions may consider their creeds indeed more “ecological” than Islam or Christianity—a claim that can be countered from the other side (1221).

Overall, all of these observations indicate that Islamic environmentalism in Indonesia is pluralist and diverse and exists in complex socio-cultural circumstances, mingling, competing, and possibly clashing with other creeds and identities. The „secular“ or, better, non-confessional environmentalism obviously plays in this regard a major role. The largest and oldest Indonesian grassroots environmental organization, Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (Indonesian Forum for the Environment, WALHI), was founded in 1980, joining Friends of the Earth International (FOEI) in 1989. The organization covers various agendas across most of Indonesia’s geographical locations (see FOEI, n.d.). Its activity intensified after the end of the Suharto regime in 1998 when a space for green politics appeared. As Klinken and Permana state:

In the historic 1999 elections, the environmental movement WALHI tried to push the large parties to adopt ‘green’ policies. The National Awakening Party (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa, PKB) – close to the popular Islamic leader Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) – did take the bait, but afterwards failed to follow through. In 2007, WALHI formed the Indonesia Green Union (Sarekat Hijau Indonesia, SHI), largely as an educational movement. This did join the international network. SHI activists then set up the Indonesian Green Party in 2012 (Klinken and Permana 2022).

Subsequently, the Indonesian Green Party has been striving to acquire for itself the possibility to partake in national elections, complicated by high administrative demands, and is currently preparing to run in the 2024 elections (Aqil 2021; Klinken and Permana 2022). Apparently, the Green Party, as in the case of other major environmental organizations, has been composed of both Muslims and non-Muslims. According to the view of its own leadership, it has a strongly modernist, ecologically radical („fundi“), and stringently non-confessional outlook (see Klinken and Permana 2022). The Platform of the Party does not mention Islam at all (see Hijau 2023). Similarly, WALHI does not seem



to work directly with Islamic or religious discourses, even though cooperation with confessional organizations occurs, as already mentioned. In this regard, it would also be interesting to compare Islamic and non-confessional environmentalism in terms of influence, scale, and mutual relationship, but extant sources do not give a sufficient answer to these questions.

The secularist or non-confessional outlook may also be the source of accounts that strike a more critical tone about Islam and the environment in Indonesia. This may be exemplified by Dewayanti and Saat's (2020) account. This locates the “eco-Islam” in the broader landscape of the plurality of faith-based organizations in Indonesia that, as the authors point out, possess their own interests in promoting particular versions of Islamic teachings and are implicated in a variety of political and cultural conflicts (Dewayanti and Saat 2020, 3). It is on this basis that the authors also put in doubt the semblance of unity, common purpose, and unquestioned efficacy of the „Environmental Islam“ in the Indonesian context by pointing out the existence of „organic“ faith-based and non-Islamic initiatives tied to a younger generation, emerging around local issues, and their lack of rapport and with the mainstream discourse promoted in the top-down regime by the major nation-wide organizations like the MUI. On this point, they also criticize these organizations for superficiality and „theologizing every debate on the environment instead of furthering understanding about the issues scientifically“ (6). Similar critical observations, mentioning the limited scale, outreach, and efficacy of faith-based initiatives, their inability to address crucial issues (like coal mining), and even their compromising attitude towards developmental activities promoted by the government also appear elsewhere (Almujaddidy 2021, 15–16; Grossman 2019; Fikri and Colombijn 2021).

From yet a different perspective, the mingling with other religious and cultural traditions may raise doubts about the very category of „Islamic“ and its uncritical application in the study of the local movements by scholars. While the influence of local traditions and concepts and their meshing with the Islamic “scriptural” eco-theological concepts is noticed in most studies (Gade 2012, 277–278; Smith 2017, 220; Mangujaya and McKay 2012, 299–300), the very concept of „local traditions“ or „customs“ (*adat*) may be viewed as reflecting a particular stance towards the question of identity, as it strips these traditions off the status of

real “religions” and subjects them to particular hierarchy (cf. Smith 2017, 215). Smith also alleges that Christians and Muslims may see indigenous groups as suitable for conversion rather than dialogue and mutual learning (ibid., 215). This may lead either to implicit (cf. Reuter 2015, 1221) or even actual conflicts between the adherents of the respective faiths and worldviews, some of which are attested in the literature, such as the conflict between the Karo people of Mount Sinabung and the local protestant church around animistic rituals performed as a way of connection between people and nature (see Tarigan 2021). Bagir, Northcott, and Wijzen’s collection (ed. 2021) provides other examples of mingling and sometimes conflicting identities that surround the practice of environmental activism imbued with spiritual values in Indonesia, based on a set of fieldwork studies, which complicate the simplistic view of “Islamic” (or another definite doctrinal, for that matter) concepts playing a role in enacting of the local environmentalism. While the institutional Islamic discourse in Indonesia may pit the scriptural religious values against the „secular“ understanding and present them as superb (see above; Gade 2015, 170–172)—an approach evidenced throughout the history of the Islamic environmental discourse right back to its origins—the reality shows that the polarities may be multifarious and much more complicated and include, e.g., the tensions between „traditionalist“ and „progressive“ visions of Islamic environmentalism, inter-confessional polemics and attempts against monopolization of the religious message by one actor. This further accentuates that the ideal and tabular imaginary of „environmental Islam“ connecting in a straight way the scriptures, people, and practice exists nowhere in reality.

Arguably, all of these nuances must be considered in assessing and categorizing the phenomena of Indonesian Islamic environmentalism for the purpose of a broader comparative perspective. Indisputably, Indonesia has become a fertile ground for the spread and proliferation of this discourse, which also seems to acquire unique characteristics there in some regard. These comprise the combination of nearly all elements that have been hitherto registered within all previously investigated areas. This includes the adoption of the discourse by traditionally educated scholars, intensive input of international (both “secular” and religion-focused ENGOs), support provided by the state, local popular

environmental activism focused on conservation and sustainability activities on the ground and advocacy—this all in a peculiar interplay with local secular and other religious environmentalisms, often influenced by the lived experience of “practicing” them in a deeply religious and in some aspects still traditional society. As such, the situation in Indonesia both supplements and complements observations made at other places and leads to similar questions while also demonstrating the salience of the dimensions of identity cultural specificity for the understanding of the proliferation of Islamic environmentalism worldwide. Finally, it should be noted that even despite the relatively prolific scholarly production, the Indonesian “eco-Islam” still lacks a systematic, fine-grained analysis that would allow for acquiring a clear sense of the scale and the overall impact of the phenomena within Indonesian society, including its interrelationships in a complex and culturally diverse landscape.

#### *5.1.4.d Globality and Limitedness of the Islamic Environmental Discourse and Uncharted Territories*

Finally, after acquiring some insight into the Islamic environmental discourse in Indonesia as undisputedly a globally significant representation, we may raise a question regarding other world regions with either majority or minority Muslim populations and the presence of the discourse therein. As has been already discussed in the beginning, the discourse indeed circulates in many different languages, and in this sense, it may be viewed as global (see 2.1.2.b). But what about the character of its concrete individual occurrences? Are there also other instances of the active local “subcultures” wherein the discourse exerts a marked influence within society and affects local public debate and, potentially, politics in the way that has been evidenced (albeit tentatively) in the case of the US, UK, and Indonesia? Obviously, such a question is not easy to answer as it concerns a linguistically and culturally diverse space, the coverage of which represents a laborious and difficult task. Still, at least from the outward signs, there seems to be little evidence for that.

This theme has already been encountered a couple of times. In Chapter 4, it has been shown that the activity of institutions, in some cases enthusiastic and in

others more lukewarm, has not resulted in either the prominent presence of the discourse in the public sphere or its impact on actors and policies (4.3.4). In this chapter, the situation in the Middle East has been analyzed in more detail, and it has been shown that the relatively intensive literary activity and scholarly interest nevertheless did not translate into the marked reverberation of the “Islamic environmentalism” within society (5.1.2.c). There is also other evidence pointing in the same direction. As already discussed (1.1.1.b), a couple of recent studies from populous Muslim countries, such as Pakistan and Bangladesh, support this assumption by the inability to prove the existence of the movement despite attempts to do so. Haq et al. (2020) thus present a (partly anecdotic) account of environmental activism and environmental problems in Pakistan and casually intersperse it with „environmental“ quotations from the Qur’an but fail to provide a concrete example of faith-based movements. Sayem’s article „Islamic Teaching and Practice of Environmental Ethics in Bangladesh“ (2018) faces a similar problem. In both cases, the existence of an “eco-Islam” movement appears more as a project or a *wish*. Eventually, this concurs with other observations, like the (even if now outdated) Foltz 2005 volume on *Environmentalism in the Muslim World* (Foltz 2005 ed.) where, despite the effort to frame the state of environmental politics in a couple of Muslim countries specifically through the lens of Islam, and summoning religious personalities to comment upon it, little persuasive evidence about the relevance of the religious discourse in addressing environmental issues is provided.<sup>154</sup> As the editor himself observes, „while there are many environmental activists throughout the world who happen to be Muslim [...] most of [them] do not appear to be working out of primarily religious motivation“ (Foltz 2005b, xiii). This further correlates with the fact that the scholarly production focused on „Islam and the environment“ in an empirical manner (Schwencke 2012; Vincenti 2017, Hancock 2018, Gade 2019, Idlallène 2021) scarcely mentions these „uncharted territories.“ Eventually, neither the reference programmatic publications (e.g., Foltz, Denny, and Baharruddin 2003; Taylor and Kaplan 2008) speak about the widespread presence of the discourse, even if it could serve their argument about the significance of Islamic environmental “values” well.

---

<sup>154</sup>In fact, some authors instead observe „reactionary“ enmity of conservative religious circles towards environmentalism (Hamed 2005; Rizvi 2005).

This also demonstrates a peculiar situation wherein the Islamic response to ecological problems and crises may well exist in a purely discursive form, i.e., “in theory,” without, however, fulfilling its envisioned role in “practice” by effectively affecting the attitudes and action of individuals on a large scale, contributing to the actual alleviation of these problems. This trait may be traced back already to Nasr ([1968] 1990) and Sardar (1984a). In all these pronouncements, the discourse is framed as virtually “global” and universal through addressing global and universal problems. Later, the *Islamic Principles* (Ba Kader et al. 1983), the Assisi Declaration (Naseef 1986), and many other statements followed this way too. Nevertheless, this globality has always been partly only performative, and “Islamic environmentalism” may be thus viewed as global primarily in the form of a loose, deterritorialized assemblage with (except for just a few mentioned exceptions) but superficial local presence.

This deterritorialized globality may be illustrated by the personalities of individual activists embedded in specific geographic contexts who have typically participated in the global, especially academic (see chapter 6), networks but have not succeeded in inciting a corresponding movement “at home.” An example of such personality may be Mohammad Aslam Parvaiz, an Indian academician and the former Vice Chancellor of Maulana Azad National Urdu University. In 1994, Parvaiz established the Islamic Foundation for Science and Environment mainly with the purpose of spreading the awareness of environmental questions among the staff and students of *madāris*, creating curricula for undergraduate and graduate courses in science and environment for Muslim students, providing consultancy on the matter and popularizing the Islamic view of environment via publications. These include the monthly popular magazine in Urdu, *Science*, devoted, among other themes, to environmental issues (see Parvaiz 2008b). Since the beginning of his engagement in Islamic-framed environmental activism, Parvaiz has also been active in networking, particularly with the US-centered cluster of the religion and ecology movement. Becoming a participant in both the 1998 Harvard and the 2000 Yale conferences (see 6.1.2), he also contributed to most of the important publications forming the backbone of the academic discourse on the Islam and environment intersection (see, e.g., Parvaiz 2003; Parvaiz 2008a; Parvaiz 2015). At the same time, his steps also went in the

“Eastward” direction as he participated in conferences and gave lectures at The Muslim Converts Association of Singapore (2003), International Islamic University in Malaysia (2004), Ministry of Environment of Indonesia (2007) and contributed to the preparation of the Muslim 7 Years Plan on Climatic Change (see Parvaiz n.d.a.).<sup>155</sup>

Similarly, in Malaysia, Adi Setia, an academician and student of M. N. al-Attas<sup>156</sup>, has been active for about twenty years in addressing the connection between Islam and the environment. Except for academic articles (see, e.g., Setia 2007), he has also become an activist, connecting his interest in the theory of ecology and economics with the promotion of the practical application of ecological principles in the fields of agriculture and circular economy. As such, he has engaged in the development of a novel model of the Islamic Gift Economy defined as “the provisioning and sharing, by mutual giving and receiving, of natural and cultural abundance for realizing material and spiritual well-being.” The model is based on the Islamic principles of charity, some of the general concepts of the environmental discourse (as it is environmentally conscious), and the overall notion of “Islamization” of society and economy (see Setia 2014). In direct connection to it, Setia also initiated in 2020 The Program for Ethical, Appropriate, and Regenerative Livelihoods (PEARL) focused on education and propagation of the idea (see PEARL n.d.). Its outreach is hard to establish.

Finally, a third example of a similar pattern may be illustrated by the career of İbrahim Özdemir, currently the head of the Department of Philosophy at the Uskudar University in Istanbul. Özdemir finished his post-graduate study at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara in 1996 with a dissertation, *The Ethical Dimension of Human Attitude Towards Nature*, subsequently published by the Turkish Ministry of Environment a year later (and later re-published by Insan Publications; for this edition see Özdemir 2008), together with a Turkish version (see Ozdermir 1997). Ozdemir finished his dissertation at a time when the interest in the intersection of religion and ecology intensified. In 1998, he attended the Harvard conference on Islam and ecology (see 6.1.2.a) and subsequently lectured on the theme in various international academic and non-academic fora. After

---

<sup>155</sup> Regarding the discourse in India, see also Bhati and Jannat 1995.

<sup>156</sup> One of the proponents of the debate on „Islamic science“ whose name has been mentioned earlier (3.2.2.a).

contributing to Foltz, Denny, and Baharuddin's volume (see Ozdemir 2003), he published on the topic in Arabic (see 2008b) and Spanish (see 2012) and his engagement in the field has continued ever since, not least by attendance of conferences on Islam/religion and ecology in the US, Malaysia and other countries, activity in organizations promoting interfaith dialogue, serving as a consultant to UNEP on the matter and taking part in the preparation of the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change (IFEES 2015; see Ozdemir n.d.a).

Working on the verge of academic careers and activism, all these authors (and still others, like Azizan Baharuddin or Fachruddin Mangunjaya) have promoted Islamic environmentalism (if only by publications or contributions to academic curricula) in their respective places of residence, tied simultaneously to the global discursive and symbolic flows and mediating the circulation of shared concepts and patterns. A similar role was, moreover, played by the activities of ARC and IFEES, running specialized programs across the different parts of the world and attempting to engage religious elites and local leaders into participation in the grand vision of, no matter whether gradual or radical, enactment of the Islamic environmental ethics, values, and laws. And "Islamic environmentalism" became universal to the point that it has been included (see Ash-Sheha 2016, 58) in multilingual popularization publications about Islam (the „catechisms“ in the more narrow sense of the word; see 2.2.1.a) and permeated the blogosphere and the internet. This feature of the effective disconnection between the proclaimed aspirations and the factual marginality of the movement, with its impact visible more or less only in two specific regions of Anglo-Saxon countries and Indonesia (and even there possessing a limited presence), is arguably too rarely discussed in the literature in sincerity. Still, it undeniably represents a major fact that should inform the thinking about „Islam and the environment“ in overall terms. I will partly return to it in the following chapter, which will critically reflect on the prevalence of the "primordialist" perspective in academia as one of the factors of the proliferation of the discourse while also its detachment from social reality. Even before that, I will now attempt to systematize the collected observations from this chapter and attempt to theorize and explain another—and now fully evident— characteristic of the Islamic environmental discourse: its heterogeneity

and diversity in terms of both the involved actors and circulated expressions, correlated also to the unevenness of its social representation “on the ground.”



## 5.2 What Defies the Catechism: The Heterogeneity of the Discourse

After going through the early stages of the discourse and the exemplary debate on the environmental crisis, and further through the role of institutions in disseminating and shaping the discourse, the present chapter has moved us towards what arguably best represents the current stage of its development. This is a situation whereby the discourse is not further actor-specific or genre-specific but is largely *generic*, being freely circulated across diverse social spaces and assemblages (again, not just Muslim but also *hybrid* ones)—of which, necessarily, only a fraction and a particular *sample* have been analyzed. As has been discussed already in the second chapter (see 2.2), the Islamic discourse on the environment is mostly based on the acceptance of shared assumptions and tropes condensed in the *catechism*. The authors and texts discussed in this chapter, too, have been shown to conform to the related set of basic tenets—like that the environment is created by God in an ideal and harmonious state, endowed by meaning and religious significance for man, subject to ethical regulations regarding its treatment and utilization, sanctioned by the principles of responsibility and accountability, and above all, that Islam unequivocally commands its preservation and conservation, embodying the source of moral guidance in the area of ecology.

Simultaneously, this chapter even more clearly documented what has also been already discussed before (2.1.2) and what the two previous chapters indicated, namely that the same pool of scriptural material and general tropes derived from it can eventually lead to different arguments, expressions, and conclusions. Being now equipped with sufficient comparative material, it is appropriate to address this diversity more systematically and attempt to explain it theoretically. In what follows, I will argue that the main differences between the various expressions of the discourse may be observed specifically in three successive areas: the different understandings and readings of the concept of *the environment* and its problems, the different approaches towards the solution of these problems in the *social* realm, and, finally, the different understandings of the

status and character of the specifically *religious* response to these problems and its measure of singularity and comprehensiveness. In all three cases, these variations will be shown to correlate and interact with the different cultures and identities of the involved actors, reflecting the broader overall heterogeneity of the *Islamic assemblage* in the current age. Eventually, this *difference in cultures and identities* will be proposed as one of the possible sociological explanations for the unevenness of the social representation of the discourse, i.e., the fact that it was adopted and proliferated in some contexts but not in others.

### **5.2.1 Different Natures and Solutions: The Variance in Framing of the Ecological Themes**

Throughout the previous discussions (see 3.1.; 4.1), it has been made well evident that the seemingly plain concepts of nature and the environment are, in reality, ontologically indeterminate, surrounded by a cacophony of different readings and interpretations and subject to changes and reevaluations in time (see also Merchant 1982; Morton 2009; Williams 1972). While Muslim authors have searched the scriptural sources of the Islamic tradition for a definite foundation for addressing ecological themes, they have eventually not succeeded in avoiding this indeterminacy. Therefore, the Islamic environmental discourse seems to be split on some basic questions as any other. This can be demonstrated in a couple of areas, beginning with the elementary qualification of the relationship between man and nature.

#### *5.2.1.a Hierarchical or Equal?*

As we have already seen, the debate on the environment and environmental ethics has been, since its beginning, accompanied by the discussion about the basic concepts delineating the man-nature relationship. One of the most persistent debates has been about the basic ethical idea of hierarchy between its two abstract components. In this regard, we may recall White's reproach to Christianity because of its "anthropocentric" theology; see White 1967, 1205). Notably, Muslim authors have not so often discussed the issue of

anthropocentrism explicitly as their main concern. They have, however, acquired implicit stances on the matter, which may be surprisingly different. On the most general level, it seems that within the framework of Islamic theology, it is difficult to avoid the notion of anthropocentrism altogether. Islamic religiosity (not unlike the Christian one), after all, revolves primarily around the relationship between God and man (cf. Izutsu 2002, 16–19). Man is the one to whom the Qur’anic revelation is addressed (see also Tlili 2012, 9), and despite the much-stressed reference to nature in the Qur’an as a significant part of the creation, the stories of men and women, their agency and destiny fill up most of the content of the book. This stress on human uniqueness is, after all, no less apparent in some of the central motives of the Islamic environmental catechism itself, perhaps most clearly in the concept of *khilāfa*, which singles out man as a divine „viceregent“ (although concrete explanations of this term very much differ; see also 6.2.2.c). This is also the reason why most authors retain in some way or another the *anthropocentric* position, which is also noticed by Afrasiabi: „What has emerged so far in the growing literature on Islamic eco-theology is at best a soft anthropocentrism that emphasizes humankind’s moral obligations to nature and animals, without, however, relinquishing the hierarchical credo that forms the basis of Islam’s anthropocentric cosmology“ (2008, 872).

Yet interestingly, this more or less consensual anthropocentrism can express itself in different forms. Thus, although Nasr, for example, locates man right into the center of the cosmic drama as a divine instrument (1990/1968, 96), this does not prevent him from espousing a radically “ascetic” position, criticizing the whole modern trajectory of scientific progress as far as it is based on the notion and practice of the unlimited manipulation of nature (see also 3.2.1). In turn, while being no less overt in its anthropocentrism, the early institutional framework for “Islamic” environmental policy proposed by Ba Kader et al. (1983) is expressed in very different terms—namely by the affirmation of the (almost complete) *instrumentality* of nature to man as a subject of „utilization“ and „subjugation“ (Ba Kader et al. 1983, 13). The same instrumental anthropocentrism based on the concept of *taskhīr*, i.e., „subjugation“ of nature to man (see also 2.2.2.d), appears also elsewhere (see, e.g., WFEIP 2000, 3; see also 4.2.1.a). This “strong” and express acceptance of the anthropocentric outlook (which, as it is

useful to note, does not per se collide with the conservationist agenda) is, however, by no means universal and is at least tamed in some other expressions significantly. A particular example may be that of Abdul-Matin, whose statement has been analyzed in detail above (see 5.2.1.d), and who uses the conviction about the „sacred“ character of nature and the „deep love of the planet“ (2010, 1–2) as his basic point of departure. Generally, the drift towards the less instrumental and more sympathetic notion of nature and things natural seems to be the prevailing trend within the discourse, particularly in its diasporic Euro-American strands, even if the express questioning of anthropocentrism has been hitherto limited mostly to scholarly writings on the topic (see Tlili 2012; Gade 2019).

Still, different readings of nature may not be reducible to the anthropocentric-non-anthropocentric dichotomy, the application of which may eventually wipe out many subtleties of the religious conceptualizations. As such, nature’s virtue of conveying God’s signs (*āyāt*; see 2.2.2.f) is significant for most authors in a way that may evade this dichotomy (added to it may also be the beauty of nature [see Qaradawi 2001, 35–37]). The assertion of anthropocentrism may eventually well combine with a strong emotional and sentimental reverence of nature (not completely alien to its romantic appreciations present in the European cultural tradition), leading to a radical ascetic opposition to the „civilizational“ interventions into it. A good example may be the discourse of the British Traditionalist Muslim Gai Eaton. Eaton asserts that the world (which is „neither more nor less than the landscape through which we pass on our journey towards the predestined end“) is „made for us [i.e., humans] and for our use“ (Eaton 1998, 43). Nonetheless, elaborating on the motive of „signs“ (*āyāt*), he attaches to the „signs“ of creation strong value, rendering them „untranslatable“ (as what can be „added“ to them) and paralleling their effect with the effect of the Revelation upon the human soul as „when, during the dawn prayer or the remembrance of Allah, bird song reaches our ears, this does not disturb us, indeed it reinforces our remembrance. On the other hand, if we hear the sound of motorcars or machinery, these sounds do indeed interrupt our worship“ (Eaton 1998, 52). According to Eaton, the modern way of life and treatment of the environment destroys the natural world and thereby also the „reminders of Allah for those who have eyes to see [...] so that there is no escape from this prison [i.e.,

the Westernized urban life]“ (Eaton 1998, 45). Arguably, such a radical conclusion would be ordinarily expected rather from a non-anthropocentric thinker in the secular context.

As it is apparent, there is thus no unified view of nature derived from the Islamic moral response and from the shared „catechism“ of multiple tropes and motives, as this view differs from case to case. Probably, this can be explained by the fact that the outlook contained in the tradition is, as Sara Tlili notes, eventually „theocentric“ (2012, ix) and cannot be definitively extrapolated to the ethical valuations of nature without taking a further interpretative position.

### 5.2.1.b *Conservation or Preservation?*

The different anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric, instrumental, and reverential readings of nature may result (although not simplistically) in different approaches towards the solution of environmental problems. As the first approach, we may single out the one most closely connected to the primarily instrumental reading of nature, which seems to correlate with the „conservationist“ approach, treating the environment essentially as a resource that must be utilized in a rational and moral way. Yasin Dutton's elaboration may be quoted as an embodiment of this approach. „The ethical position of Islam,“ states Dutton, „is simple enough to understand. Allah has created the earth and everything that is on it ,for‘ man.“ (1998, 57). Dutton documents this position by manifold examples postulating the utility of nature to man (see *ibid.*, 57–58; see also 2.2.2.d). In accordance with this position, he also states: „From an Islamic legal standpoint, the question of how to use the environment is ultimately one of the rights to, and uses of, natural resources“ (Dutton 1998, 58). Needless to say, the framing of nature as “resources” does not imply a license in their use. The usage is limited by “responsibility” (Dutton 1998, 57) with all the related sanctions. This approach eventually results in the imaginary of management of nature (also expressly verbalized by Dutton).<sup>157</sup> As such, this has been evidenced as being strongly represented, particularly in the texts emerging from the institutional milieu, that,

---

<sup>157</sup> „Environmental management is thus first and foremost an economic issue, behind which lies an ethical standpoint. The basic ethical standpoint of the Muslims is belief in Allah and acceptance of His laws, which include economic laws“ (Dutton 1998, 73).

in their overall intention, typically aim at the reconciliation of the demands of development and environmental protection (see 4.2; 4.3).

Against that, a nearly as influential segment of the discourse can be identified, leaning more towards what can be viewed as the “preservationist” approach, comprising of, as far as possible, minimizing the impact of humanity on nature altogether. This “ascetic” motive has been identified right from the emergence of the discourse, with Nasr as its long-term representative. As it has been made evident, Nasr has more or less refuted the idea of (social and economic) “development” as such (cf 1990/1968, 13) together with the whole instrumental and materialist notion of nature. The very same similar inclinations can be evidenced across many different expressions of the discourse, not least the above-quoted texts of Eaton, but also other moralist expressions in which environmental destruction is identified primarily with greed and materialism (see, e.g., Abdel Haleem 1998b; see also Shah-Kazemi 2021; Khalid 2019). It also figures as a partial motive in many of the latter-day “civic” approaches focused on individual lifestyles (Abdul-Matin 2010; IFEES 2015; Shezad n.d.).

This again demonstrates that two, in some regards, contravening approaches to the environment can be derived from the shared catechism. Notably, few, if any, authors reflect on this discrepancy or engage in polemics with other positions within the field. These positions thus coexist without substantive debate about their merits and validity. In this way, the discourse thus provides a great measure of flexibility and space to promote different agendas under the same banner conditioned by the concrete actor’s identity and personal inclinations. There is no clarity on what the genuine “Islamic position” is.

### 5.2.1.c *Relating to Science*

Science—or, to avoid speaking in reified generalities, *sciences*—have been a couple of times mentioned as possessing a specific relationship to the area of environmentalism and environmental matters, namely by mediating the information about the systemic changes in ecosystems and planetary systems that establish the basis of our understanding of environmental processes as well as the phenomena of ecological crisis (see 3.1). Within the Islamic discourse, the

question of relationship to science has been, however, one of the points of difference. The question has been shown to play a significant role in it from the beginning. The main representative of a critical attitude in this area has been S. H. Nasr, who has held scientism, i.e., the elevation of science into the position of the arbiter of truth, effectively responsible for modern ecological decay.

As shown in detail, this position largely stemmed from Nasr's belief in the supremacy of metaphysics (obviously theistic one) as the source of fundamental knowledge to which scientific inquiries should be subjected (Nasr [1968] 1990, 114). This skeptical view of science has also been shared by some other voices (notably the Traditionalists) and can be exemplified, e.g., by Eaton. According to this British intellectual, even if science may reveal the actual structure of the material reality, it reveals nothing about its meaning (Eaton 1998, 51). This is supplemented by the skepticism towards particular branches of science, most significantly the theory of evolution as the notorious area of conflict. Eaton (along with Nasr [1990, 124—127]) considers evolution a „myth“ (a synonym of theory or hypothesis in his view) which, though „unproven, “ has „undermined religious faith in the West.“ (1998, 50). For Eaton, the belief in evolution also has direct implications for environmental ethics: „If man is the evolutionary crown of matter, then all lower forms, whether plant or animal, are like rungs of a ladder which can be kicked away or misused by the climber; so superior is he, that it would seem absurd for him to show respect or consideration for other forms of life“ (Eaton 1998, 51). On the other hand, other branches of science can be acknowledged, such as quantum mechanics within which „matter is no longer considered as something entirely knowable, and the previous absolute faith in mechanical laws has given way to a less rigid view of the physical universe“ (Eaton 1998, 50). Eaton greets this as a potential antidote to materialism. Nonetheless, due to its sophisticated nature, quantum mechanics is not widely understood and taught (i.e., in schools), so the general public becomes restricted to „pure materialism“ (Eaton 1998, 50).<sup>158</sup> The question of the relationship to science has also been shown to dominate the discourse of Sardar and Manzoor (see 1984), with similar (although less radical) outcomes.

---

<sup>158</sup> Incidentally, the same view is held by Merchant, according to whom the majority of people still think in imageries of Newton's and Leibniz's classical physics of the 17th century (Merchant 1982, 275).

This disregard for science and its accusations of detrimental influence on human culture is, however, rather a minority position. For most of the authors, a basic concord between science and Islam is typically assumed, often implicitly (the question is not central anymore like it was in the initial polemical phase of the discourse), sometimes explicitly (see Abdul-Matin, 4). A specific motive represents the claim that the Qur'an contains a kind of "primordial" scientific knowledge (a doctrine known as Bucailleism) that may be extended specifically to the realm of environmental sciences (e.g. by the claim that *mīzān* represents the concept of ecological balance) and even to the claim that contemporary environmentalism is therefore not anything new (see ISESCO 2002a, 82–83; see also Abdallah 2001, 12; Qaradawi 2001, 20). As in the previous cases, doctrinal positions thus influence the articulation of the discourse, and they may combine in various ways with postures on other questions.

#### 5.2.1.d *Avoiding Dilemmas: The Reluctance to Address Environmental Problems in Detail*

Another trait that can be observed is that the discourse, through its focus on values and moral framings, has remained rather distant from digging deeper into the nature and character of actual environmental problems. Paradoxically, the only partial exception to this rule has been the Muslim authors writing in Arabic (Faqqi 1993; Qaradawi 2001), who, as it has been shown, set out to provide their readers with concrete information on the actual mechanisms of pollution and their sources. But even here, the more controversial and specific themes remained unaddressed, and the authors avoided getting into the question of concrete plans or strategies for politics and society (this is particularly evident in al-Qaradawi's eventual diverting of the whole question towards the cultural conflict between Islam and the West; see also below). This distance from real environmental problems can also be regarded as related to the limited *efficacy* of the discourse in eliciting social change or affecting practice. At the same time, this must not be viewed as surprising since the area of ecology involves an enormous amount of dilemmas, many of which are further compounded due to the clash of contravening ideological commitments.



This issue can be illustrated, e.g., on the crucial and ecologically relevant question of population control. Let me first briefly present the actual practice of population policy in Muslim countries, upon which it can be illustrated that, in the modern context, the „Islamic stance“ on population control can be best described as ambiguous. In 1994, the UN conference on population in Cairo was not attended by several Muslim countries, exposed to criticism, and even attacked by members of al-Jama‘a al-Islamiya. This is even though, as Jabra and Jabra note, some norms in Islam are consistent with fertility control and family planning (Jabra and Jabra 2003, 425–426; see also Ammar 1995). Generally, the fact that the attitudes have differed is perhaps best evident in the case of Iran after the Revolution of 1979, which put it under the firm control of the followers of Ayatollah Khomeini. Under the government comprising many members of the Iranian Shi‘i clergy, Iran underwent one of the most rapid demographic transitions in the world (second only to Maldives) due to the successful application of birth control through education and contraception. This policy, which was sanctified by Khomeini and successfully executed by the state administration of the Islamic Republic, clearly shows the versatility of the “Islamic” position, which was, in this case, able to unequivocally superimpose the pragmatic concerns for the danger of overpopulation on other possible religious concerns (see Harris 2017, 126–140; see also Jabra and Jabra 2003). In contrast, Egypt, which experimented with demographic policies from the 1950s on, was largely unsuccessful in trimming the population growth in the country, not least because of the boycott by the medical staff intertwined with and influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood, which tended to oppose the policies (Jabra and Jabra 2003, 433–441). In any case, very few authors writing on “Islam and the environment” discuss the question explicitly, which may point to the fact that it is perceived as controversial and better to avoid. One of the authors who discussed this was Nawal Ammar (see 1995; 2008). Ammar characterizes Islam as a “pronatal religion” (2008, 865; see also 1995). She also attributes the high population growth rates in Muslim countries (which she acknowledges as one of the reasons for the ecological crisis) mainly to marginalized conditions of women stemming in contradiction to Islam from ‚patriarchal and misogynist [...] local cultures.‘ (2008, 865). The example of

al-Qaradawi slamming the idea of population control has already been mentioned (2001, 32).

The fact that no consensual position on population policy—as an area where religious normativity could prove particularly effective in achieving an actual change (as, after all, the successful population policy on the part of Khomeinists in Iran, notably without reference to the religious framework, illustrates)—has not been reached within the discourse and the theme has been virtually ignored, may illustrate a broader lacuna yet. Despite the general consensus that „the environment“ shall be protected, harm, pollution, squandering, and abuse avoided, balance restored, and responsibility upheld, the texts by Muslim environmentalists relatively rarely state where concrete sacrifices should be made. This correlates with the fact that they abstain from criticizing *particular policies of particular actors*, taking policy stances on significant problems (e.g., the fossil fuel extraction that well concerns a number of Muslim countries), or attempting to tackle the principal dilemmas (most acutely the conflict between environmental and developmental policies). As such, the „real“ environment, appearing „outside“ the discursive realm (and not a mere abstract signifier in moral propositions), producing these dilemmas and often requiring painful moral and political decisions, seems to be too frequently too far from the debate. Nevertheless, there are partial signs of the reversal of this trend, such as in the renunciation of the fossil fuels industries in the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change (IFEES 2015). This is even if also this document stays short of a more daring and explicit critique of concrete actors, does not go behind a vague consensus, and, overall, remains a far cry from the radical forms of environmental activism of groups such as Friends of the Earth or Greenpeace, regularly targeting in their campaigns specific industries or projects. A move towards a more concrete agenda and positions has also been registered in Indonesia (even if disputed [cf. Gade 2015; Almujaiddid 2021, 15–16]) and can be found, e.g., in Abdul-Matin’s statement (2010). Generally, it thus seems to correlate with the emergence of the “activist” discourse and the more grounded social movements.

## 5.2.2 Different Roles of Religion: Between „Ethical“ Inspiration and Legal Obligation

Besides different framings and understandings of „the environment“ and the relationship between man and nature, the authors developing environmentalist ideas in the name of Islam have also not reached a consensus on what role Islam and the „truth“ of the Islamic stance on environmental matters should actually play. The imaginaries of such roles differ across various swaths of the discourse and can be divided into three main ones (as in other cases, boundaries between them need not always be strict).

### 5.2.2.a *Metanoia and „Spiritual Revolution“*

The first broad imaginary may be well defined by the ancient Greek term *metanoia* or the “change of heart.” Within the broader social context, we may then conceive of it as a revolution (or reform) occurring not in the political or social but in the spiritual realm. Arguably, this kind of response was characteristic especially for the discussions in the early phase of the discourse, also related to the atmosphere beyond the boundaries of the Islamic assemblage (see White 1967; Tyonbee 1972; Berry [1978] 2003) and most extensively appears in the pioneering work of Nasr (1968 [1990]). As such, it has also been thoroughly described in the section 3.2.

In its strong version, it can be characterized as an imaginary of a historical calamity inflicted upon humanity by the acceptance of the immoral ideology of secular modernity, which is at odds with environmental limits (and frequently also with human spiritual well-being, morality, and dignity as such). The only way out of this calamity is seen in the rejection of the flawed, immoral worldview responsible for it. Religion is then identified as a source of alternative values, ideally capable of changing the trajectory of modernization and subjecting its inconsiderate materialism to moral and ethical regulation, including, e.g., in the area of epistemology and science (see particularly Manzoor 1984; Sardar 1984a). Arguably, Osama bin Laden’s vision can also be put in this category (see 2010).

Yet because this “moral revolution” has not occurred, and neither has the immediate ecological collapse, this position became progressively less prominent. Nevertheless, Nasr and a handful of other authors maintained their conviction about the inevitability of the “spiritual revolution” (see e.g., Eaton 1998; Shah-Kazemi 2021). In still other texts, the notion remains present in a weaker version as the accentuation of the abstract clash of religious morality with immorality, typically combined with an admonishing tone (Abdel Haleem 1998b, Qaradawi 2001).

#### 5.2.2.b *The Attempts to Develop Islamic Institutions for the Environmental Protection*

Within the second main vision of the role of religion vis-à-vis ecological decay, the remedy has been seen in what can be generally viewed as the application of “Islamic norms” in society. The idea that the main asset of Islam in dealing with environmental problems is the existence of a strong normative principle and system of *sharī‘a* can be traced as far back as to Manzoor, who proposes that it would be applied to concrete ecological issues in Muslim countries (1984, 158). The same idea is expressed in the 1986 WWF-sponsored Assisi declaration by A. Naseef as “Shari’ah [...] must also become the vanguard for environmental legislation” (Naseef 1986). Practical experiments with this approach have also been apparent from the early stage of the discourse. It comprises the overall framing of the 1983 *Islamic Principles* (Ba Kader et al. 1983), issued as a quasi-legal document grounding the administrative practice in Saudi Arabia (even though this eventually opted for a statutory law; see 4.3) and beyond.

This reflects a longer-term imaginary present in the discourse that identifies the actual capacity of religion to contribute to the solution of environmental problems with its ability to provide concrete norms for that purpose. Various avenues in this direction have been proposed. The theme has been popular, especially with conservative scholars like al-Qaradawi (2001), who went to great lengths to list applicable legal categories. This „nomocratic“ vision, embracing lists of obligatory practices (like turning off lights), has been presented

earlier in this chapter (5.2.2.b) and has been elaborated by still other authors (Abdallah 2001; Shirazi 2000) and in other ways (see, e.g., Llewellyn 2003).

Among the relevant legal concepts and principles that have been proposed are *maqāṣid al-sharī‘a* (2.2.2.k), easily applicable thanks to the utilitarian logic (see also Ba Kader et al. 1983), along with norms governing land ownership and categorizing land into different types directly presented as institutions of „environmental management“ (see, e.g., Dutton 1998, 58–59; Qaradawi 2001, 69–74), the general tenet of not causing harm (*lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār*; Dutton 1998, 58–60), the institutions of *himā* and *ḥarīm* (i.e. „commons“ with restricted usufruct; see also below), *ḥisba* (i.e. traditional policing authority; see Qaradawi 2001, 245–250) and imposing fines and punishments on wrongdoers (Ba Kader et al. 1983; al-Qaradawi 2001, 338–240, 250–253; see also 2.2.2.k). Another instrument that has been pondered and occasionally realized is the issuing of fatwas, prohibiting particular practice—one that has been most developed in the Indonesian context (a concise overview of *fatāwā* issued in relation to environmental issues is given by Idllalène 2021, 37; see also Mangunjaya 2010a; Mangunjaya and McKay 2012; Herdiansyah, Jokopitoyo and Munir 2016).

As it may be noticed, the field of environmental discourse thus has significantly embraced what is often perceived as inadmissible or viewed with suspicion in Western liberal circles: to claim that certain, if not all, aspects of human life should be governed not only by religious ethics but by outright “legislation” based on shari‘a. Eventually, the need for an institutional framework even resulted in the demand for a genuine Islamic political framework. Dutton (whose essay appears in one of the mainstream publications within the discourse), after affirming the need for the Islamic economic system (sanctioned by the Islamic legal system; cf. Dutton 1998, 58, 73), thus goes as far as to propose the need for an Islamic political system as a basic precondition for the solution of ecological problems. Talking about the necessity of the economic system, he says: „Neither of these [i.e., economic regulations] are possible, however, without amirate, that is, the political authority of an amir with a group who accept his leadership and who, together, can put these judgements into practice.“ (Dutton 1998, 73; see also al-Qaradawi 2001, 238–240).

So, if Hancock claims (2018, 60) that jurisprudence has been overlooked among Islamic environmentalists, this is not necessarily the case everywhere. In fact, it has been very much present in the discourse, even though it can be assessed as having failed to produce a coherent or systematic framework for the application of these legal norms in practice. In this sense, it has been acknowledged by Samira Idllalène (whose work I will discuss in the next chapter; see 6.2.2.b) that the real normative system does not exist: „to an environmental law scholar, talking about Islamic environmental law may seem a bit premature. As such, there is no branch or discipline, properly speaking, called Islamic environmental law. However, there are a few Shari’a rules that have some *potential* to be used for the protection of the environment“ (Idllalène 2021, 31).

The basic problem in this regard seems to be eventually the lack of concrete, casuistic examples of how the religious norms should be applied and demonstrations of what would be the merit for opting for shari’a in regulating often highly technical environmental matters, where the regulation typically follows from the logic of the environmental-economical (and often material) processes, rather from some ideational principles. Eventually, this deficiency is not overcome even by Idllalène as she ultimately bases her assertion of the necessity of Islamic environmental law on essentially a *cultural* argument, namely that the statutory law does not command enough respect in Muslim countries and is not observed (2021, 12–18; cf. also Al-Gain 1983, 9).

Overall, the debate on applying Islamic legal norms in practice continues in the Islamic environmental discourse, but tangible results in a more extensive application of this law are still absent, not least because of the lack of state actors interested in adopting and applying them (as it has been debated in 4.3).

### 5.2.2.c *Inspiring Environmental Values in Civic Life and Everyday Practice*

Finally, the third major vision of the role of religious morality in addressing environmental problems, along with the “moral revolution” and the normative system of obligations, has been one which may be approximated to the individual morality or “applied ethics” to be observed in everyday life. This

approach has particularly informed the Western diasporic strands of Islamic environmentalism and, apparently, also the practice in Indonesia. Arguably, it is best exemplified by the work of Abdul-Matin (2010), who makes an extensive, eloquent, and persuasive case for such personal morality, which is simultaneously free of the previous two dimensions. Among other examples is the practice of organizations like Khaleafa, Bahu Trust, and IFEES (see 5.1.1.c; 5.1.1.d). What seems to be most distinct of this approach is that it is not normatively specific and is therefore open to adaptation of agendas coming outside of Islam (and being set by experts or within the broader public debate—the morality comprises almost solely from the intention). These agendas need not even be re-framed as “Islamic”; rather, they are deemed as religiously sound and desirable simply because they are conducive to environmental protection, which is a *general* demand of Islamic morality. In such a case, the general ethical tenets and actual norms are thus split apart. Religion can be viewed as deterritorialized in this way (Abdul-Matin’s concept of *Green Deen* illustrates this well; see 5.1.1.d) and even, in a particular sense, *secularized*, conforming to the ideal of a private faith which may inspire one’s conduct, but is not used as a ground for decision-making in the public sphere. The fact that this approach can also be transposed in the political sphere is well illustrated by the *Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change*, which, affirming the principles of liberal politics, represents a universalist call for adhering to the scientific consensus and upholding policies set by the IPCC, all in cooperation among multiple groups.

It is also useful to note that, eventually, many activities that employ specific Islamic normative terms (like *fatwas* rendering particular practices *ḥarām*, „forbidden“ under shari‘a) may play functionally the same role and may be mobilized to promote the „secular“ environmentalist agenda (the hybridity of religious and secular surfaces here once again). In this sense, a strict line cannot be drawn. Still, it can be proposed that the approach based on personal ethics and “values,” at least for now, most readily corresponds to the actual role that the Islamic environmental discourse plays in society.

### 5.2.3 Different Views of Identity: Between „Us“ and „Them“

Last but not least, the diversity of the discourse has been shown to reproduce different approaches to religious identity. Notably, this dimension has rarely been addressed in the literature, limited to casual remarks, like one by Idllalène, noting that “Especially in the aftermath of the tragedy of September 11, 2001, likely [sic] perpetuated by a terrorist group (Al Qaida) claiming its affiliation to Islam, governments in Muslim countries have become more aware of the necessity to promote a positive image of Islamic practices” (2021, 59). Promotion of environmental values through religious language falls, according to the author, to this category, and may thus occur even if genuine interest in the environment “for its own sake” is missing (ibid.). Idllalène, however, does not provide specific examples of such a practice and, notably, does not discuss the issue of what may be viewed as “identitarian” instrumentalization of the Islamic environmental discourse anywhere else. Therefore, she also reduces this instrumental role of the discourse on states and governments.

Arguably, such an assessment is, however, wrong. In this last section of this chapter, I will briefly discuss, first, how relating to other identities (religious or non-religious) comprises one of the basic variances of the Islamic environmental discourse and, second, how the ability of the discourse to put one’s religious identity in a positive light (its “apologetic value”) may be a sociologically significant factor in its circulation.

#### 5.2.3.a *Relating to Other Faiths and Cultures*

How do the actors within the discursive field of “Islamic environmentalism” relate to other faiths and cultures? This theme has surfaced more pronouncedly in this chapter, where two contrasted positions have also been identified: the eclectic and liberal, rendering “eco-Islam” essentially as a part of the broader environmentalist movement and effort (epitomized by Abdul-Matin’s articulation [2010] but shared to various degrees also by other actors from the Western diasporic milieu; see 5.1.1), and the conservative and traditionalist, rendering Islam as a singular and closed normative system embracing answers to



ecological dilemmas along with all the others (thoroughly represented by Yusuf al-Qaradawi [2001]; see also 5.2.2).

In reality, the spectrum of positions within the discourse is, however, much more fine-grained, and authors who claim otherwise a liberal and cosmopolitan position may still, in other regards, employ tropes of religious and cultural exclusivity. A case in point may be comparisons with other faiths and religions. This has been, after all, shown to be a heated topic right from the beginning of the debate on religion and ecology, with White (1967) and Toynbee (1972) being critical of Christianity and comparing it to other, less “anthropocentric” religions. Also, such comparisons often appear within the subsequent Islamic discourse on ecology. Thus, for example, as Eaton states, “Christians in recent centuries and their heirs in the post-Christian age have taken this as licence justifying the greedy exploitation of the natural environment” (1998, 43). This implicit comparison with Christianity may also take the form of the direct juxtaposition of theological tenets. Thus, according to Haq, Islam is characteristic of the stressing of the dignity of earthly human existence, which does not “underdeem” nature, in contrast to the “state of disgrace” ensuing from the Biblical myth of the fall of man (2001, 147). Such comparisons may also extend elsewhere, e.g., to the pre-Islamic period. As Ibrahim Özdemir states, „For pre-Islamic Arabs, nature was lifeless, meaningless, and purposeless“ (2021).<sup>159</sup>

On the other hand, not all authors lean towards this notion of exclusivity. A British Muslim environmental activist, Kamran Shezad, thus says, “The majority of holy books and scriptures, such as the Quran, the Torah and the Bible, contain vast amounts of teachings on nature and the environment” (see 2018). Perhaps most notably, S. H. Nasr has been shown to be a long-term champion of the notion of shared universality of all the (orthodox) religious traditions—a view that, however, excludes secularity as morally and epistemologically right position nevertheless (see 3.2.1). Indeed, relating to secularity (and more broadly to Western modernity, typically viewed as closely linked) represents another significant and sensitive point.

Generally, it can be said that for the majority of expressions of “Islamic environmentalism,” at least an implicit tension with secularity occurs. In most

---

<sup>159</sup> This statement occurs around 00:45:00

cases, this takes the form of a polemic with a particular state of culture and its consequences. This may, however, easily slide towards more damning terms, like in the diagnosis put forth by Eaton: “for the contemporary Westerner, economic progress is an end in itself, and the pseudo-religion of progress demands sacrifices: not only the animals, but the forests and the rivers and all the many riches with which this theatre has been endowed by its Creator” (Eaton 1998, 47). Eaton thus sees modern man as “predator and exploiter, devouring this earth. His needs grow, they are never satisfied, and the more he consumes, the more ravenous he is” (1998, 47). Still, for Eaton, this posture is more than anything an appeal for the “ascetic” reconsideration of these harmful inclinations and not an incitement towards the clash of civilizations.

Nevertheless, in the imagination of other authors, this notion can take more radical and even xenophobic overtones, with the attention drawn not to the causal mechanisms of the environmental crisis but to the specific civilizational actors who are to be blamed for it. This has already been illustrated by a number of examples originating from conservative scholars’ discourse, often keen to point out the responsibility of the “West” or, even more specifically, the chief Western superpower of the US (Gum‘a 2011; Lafmejani 1394/2015, 24–25, 40; Qaradawi 2001, 150–151, 176, 184–185; see also 5.2.1). In conservative scholars’ discourse, the distinction between environmentally sound and destructive behavior may, at the same time, virtually merge with the categories of belief and unbelief. Environmental problems are then explicitly identified with “disbelief” (*kufr* or *kufrān*) (see Qaradawi 230–231) and other deplorable transgressions against religion itself (including, e.g., rebelling against God and following Satan [Qaradawi 2001, 202–204; 226–227]). As it may be noticed, the actual *moral* position is then implied to be possible only within the realm of religious *orthodoxy* and *orthopraxy*: the ecologically sound practice cannot be expected from impious, and irreligion, secularity, and secular modernity are then destined to environmental decay and evil. As it has been shown, the environmental discourse has been mobilized to the same end also by Osama bin Laden during his very real confrontation with the ungodly West (see 5.1.3).

Finally, such unequivocal attribution of blame for the ecological malady can raise a question about the state of Muslim societies themselves, which—

despite the claim of the superiority of the genuine ethical values ingrained in the Islamic tradition—do not typically display the measure of the “sound” ecological practice that would surpass other cultures and societies (see Pouran and Hakimian 2019; Verhoeven 2019; Deboulet and Mansour 2022). Most authors do not extensively thematize this fact, and if so, the answer usually is that the Islamic ethics of the environment fell out of usage due to the corrupting effects of colonization and modernization (we have seen this opinion in Eaton [1998, 44–45; see also Nasr 1990; Sardar 1991; Manzoor 1984]), which may be also read as an indirect vindication of the failure of Muslims to be “ecological” enough in practice. As it is important to stress, this issue is, however, significant by and large only for the authors who invoke the “identitarian” discourse on inter-communal differences and is meaningless in the civic activist discourse focused on congruence of values, dialogue, and cooperation (like in the Islamic climate declaration, where “competition in good deeds” is exhorted [IFEES 2015; see also Haq 2001, 144–145]).

As demonstrated, the attitudes towards the question of identity and the character and status of Islamic environmental “values” vis-à-vis other faiths and cultures differ across various swaths of the discourse. Arguably, the reason that the discourse becomes part of argumentation in the intercommunal polemic and can even be mobilized for the virtual “cultural war” against the West must be ascribed to its more general trait: the *apologetic* value.

### 5.2.3.b *The Apologetic Value of the Discourse and its Significance in the Social Context*

It can be claimed that the Islamic discourse on the environment, at least in its current prevailing form, can be regarded as *principally* apologetic. Arguably, this returns to its characteristic of having been formulated as and, in most cases, possessing a structure of a *moral response* to ecological crisis. This can be best explained by returning to the (virtual) debate between White (blaming religion) and Nasr (blaming irreligion), in which this characteristic has been exemplified (see 3.3). Let me recall the central argument: Given the unequivocality of the moral dimension of the ecological crisis (it is almost impossible to render the

ecological harm morally positive or admissible), it is very hard for religiously committed actors to acquire a posture different from identifying one's own tradition as one commanding the environmental conservation and preservation: conceding imperfections in the environmental morality of a given religion would mean effectively conceding a fault in its very system of morality and veracity (3.3.1.b).

Arguably, this thesis has been now much better documented as valid empirically. With essentially no exceptions, in all texts that have been subsequently investigated, those who have addressed the questions of the environment and ecology from the Islamic perspective implicitly refuted White's argument and stood decisively on Nasr's side: whoever's the actual responsibility for the ecological problems may be, and whatever is the solution, Islam and the Islamic tradition is rendered as on the "right side"—it is not a source of either an incitement of the ecologically harmful action or a moral indifference and negligence to it. On the contrary, as a universal claim goes, Islam harbors positive environmental „values,“ „precepts, “ and „commandments“ that, once put in practice and conscientiously heeded, bring about the harmony between humankind and the environment—a harmony, which is the only conceivable natural and moral state, standing in contrast to crises and harms which undermine human security and well-being and alter the face of nature in a negative way. Obviously, such a claim is simultaneously not framed as a „moral response“ or an interpretative construct of any kind but presented as incontestable, factual, and evident.

Arguably, this now also helps to better explain the *functional* role of the "catechism" as a collection of generic tropes and arguments (see 2.2) that has progressively emerged within the process of the articulation of the moral response to ecology within the Islamic discourse. This catechism, among its other possible roles, serves as proof and documentation of the positive, moral, and constructive Islamic attitude to ecology. It is also for this reason that it may be argued that it possesses an *inherent apologetic value*. As far as the urgency of ecological problems and the need for their resolution is globally acknowledged, any doctrine, ideology, or religious message can be presented in a positive light by embracing pro-environmental values both among its adherents and outsiders. Crucially, this

apologetic value of the discourse as an affirmation of the moral integrity and veracity of the Islamic message as well as one's own identity occurs *along with* what has been described above as the moral motivation of the response to ecology (3.3.1). As a matter of course, it does not invalidate the sincerity of moral aims—even if it is also independent of it.

Arguably, the apologetic value of the Islamic environmental discourse (as well as the broader interplay of identities discussed above) should not be discarded as a potentially useful sociological explanation of some of the phenomena surrounding the circulation and variance of the discourse and its acceptance by different constituencies and social groups. Let me briefly recount several areas where such an explanation could prove illuminating, shedding light on some otherwise hardly explainable facts.

The first area where this explanation can be tentatively applied is the uneven distribution of “Islamic environmentalism,” especially in the form of social movements and the generic presence of the discourse within society. Arguably, according to the basic economic logic of marginal utility, the apologetic dimension of the discourse should possess more value in places where multiple identities are represented and mutually compared—as it is precisely the situation where presenting one's own identity in a positive light matters. If this hypothesis is correct, the Islamic environmentalist identity should be more valued—and the motivation for its development bigger—in a non-Muslim or multicultural milieu. In fact, the actual localization of active Muslim environmental social movements seems at least partly to correspond with this hypothesis: the first and still probably the most vibrant communities of activists emerged in the minority setting in the UK (and a little bit later also in the US; cf. 5.1). In this regard, it can be hardly overlooked, that the promotion of Islamic environmentalism represents a good opportunity to present the Muslim identity publicly in connection to agenda, which is viewed largely positively and is, moreover, free of potential sources of discord or suspicion such as cultural differences (like those which may surface in gender relations or politics). The fact that the Islamic-environmentalist identity is assessed positively from the “outside” has been, after all, documented, among other things, by the praise of a member of the British royal family, Prince Philip, a long-term supporter of the trend (see 2003; see also 4.2.2). In one of the accounts

above, by Fazlun Khalid, the lack of a “credible answer” to ecological issues on the part of Islam was also expressly identified as a perceived deficiency to be subsequently rectified by his activist engagement (see IFEES, n.d.h). As a matter of course, this correlation cannot be by any means viewed in a deterministic manner. Other factors may be in play, too. Among these may be the general valuation of environmentalism and environmental agenda in the given place and the direct transmission of ideas and identities (both seem to have a strong positive influence in the UK and US settings, too, with the latter being represented by the activity of secular ENGOS promoting religious environmentalism and the systematic development of academic discourse; see also 4.2.1; 6.1; 6.2).

This raises the question of whether this explanation could also be applied to Indonesia as another “hub” of Islamic environmentalism. Obviously, in this case, we speak about the Muslim-majority country. Still, as it has been discussed, it is far from culturally homogenous, and the Islamic religious identity has been shown to coexist there with multiple others, particularly in the form of local traditions (see Reuter 2015, 1221; Smith 2017, 215; Bagir, Northcott, and Wijzen 2021). This would render its case fitting into the presented scheme. Also, other factors, like the salience of environmental problems and ecological agenda, as well as the intensive activity of international ENGOS in the country (which may have also contributed to the transmission of the Islamic-environmentalist ideas), seem to render it more fertile ground for the proliferation of the discourse (see Reuter 2015, 1222; cf. 5.1.4.a; 5.1.4.b). The fact that environmental themes enter strifes among faith-based organizations and may become a subject of promoting particular interests (Dewayanti and Saat 2020) and that they may serve to project a particular “self-image” (Reuter 2015, 1223) has also been registered in literature.

Finally, the hypothesis can also be applied *negatively*. Particularly in the Middle Eastern context, despite the thematization of ecology by Islamic scholars, the civic Muslim-environmentalist identity promoted via social movements seems to be close to absent (see 4.3.4; 5.1.2.c). This eventually means that as far as environmental activism exists in the Middle East (as it indeed does), it takes virtually exclusively the „secular“ form adapted from its mainstream global expressions, i.e., it is not connected with religion and religious identity. Why so? Probably, also in this case, the explanation through the apologetic value of the

discourse may provide some hints. In a situation where religion is still very much a part of public life, in many cases sanctioned by the state and monopolized by conservative scholars as the guardians of the orthodox doctrine, the connection of one's environmentalist allegiances and commitments with Islam and their express articulation as "Islamic environmentalism" may be less attractive, in comparison with the separation of the two identities. Conceivably, the Western-modelled secular environmentalist identity may be, in turn, perceived as a more attractive projection of one's „modern“ and „progressive“ outlook (and this is even if the religious motivation may be present in the background). Among still other reasons, the weaker position of the environmental agenda (particularly as far as it is expressly represented as "environmental" [see Wahby 2018]) in overall terms may be considered. Finally, religion in most Middle Eastern countries tends to be more tied by tradition and social convention, which may prevent one from combining the environmentalist and Muslim identity in a creative and syncretic way that has been documented in Western secular settings. In any case, the outcome of this situation is that the Islamic environmental discourse is a domain of scholars who adapt it to their peculiar doctrinal allegiances and attempt to promote it in society without, however, significant impact and emergence of an organic activist movement.

Arguably, the explanation through identity could still be applied to other problems—for example, why the framing of the environmental agenda through Islamic concepts has been abandoned by virtually all Muslim governmental actors as well as ISESCO, the branch of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. As partly documented by the shift of ISESCO's communication strategy in time (see 4.2.3.a), the most plausible reason can be that such a framing ultimately brings few benefits, particularly in the realm of international cooperation governed professionalized routines and focus on technical aspects, where such „culturalization“ is not common and could be counterproductive.

Admittedly, such hypotheses should be, at this stage, treated more as thought experiments. They can, however, provide tentative explanations of phenomena that would be otherwise difficult to attribute to other causes. They may also inform further research on the matter. Overall, they point toward the fact that the interplay between "Islamic environmentalism" and identity should not be

underestimated. In most general terms, the function of manifesting a particular identity may be viewed as the third general sociological explanation capable of explaining the discourse's structure and circulation, standing alongside the expression of morality (3.3) and the imagined efficacy in facilitating positive social change (4.3). I will again return to this aspect, and particularly to the apologetic dimension of the discourse, in the last chapter, which will focus on the Islamic environmental discourse as an object of knowledge in academic sphere.



# 6 Taking Scholarly Perspective: The Academic Discourse on Environmental Ethics, Ecotheology and Beyond

In the previous three chapters, I have successively gone through three separate sources and driving motivations of the Islamic discourse on the environment. The first focused on the moral dimension of the environmental crisis and identified it as a primary and unifying source of motivation, which stirred the early voices to acquire a religiously motivated stance towards the question and keeps playing this role in other instances. The second highlighted institutions' capacity and specific motivation in further establishing and popularizing the discourse. The third paid attention to the role of the pre-established social roles and identities, such as that of environmental activists or Islamic scholars, in molding the various concrete expressions of the discourse. As such, these inquiries have already sufficiently documented the heterogeneity of the discourse and its character of an assemblage, which ultimately does not return to one driving force or social factor but to a multiplicity of them. Finally, in this chapter, it is possible to address the last important factor that has arguably influenced the discursive field and contributed to its current state: the scholarly reflection on the theme of "Islam and the environment."

For an attentive reader, this role of the academic sphere must have been already made apparent in several instances. Both S. H. Nasr and P. Manzoor (see 3.2) were, in their own ways, scholars educated in Western academia and applied scholarly perspectives, concepts, and methods in their conceptualizations of the Islamic attitude towards environmental questions. The influential 1983 *Principles* were prepared by no one other than academicians, often Western-educated, from

the Abdulaziz University (see 4.2.1.a). Still, more generally, also other expressions of the discourse were, more often than not, produced and promoted by representatives of the educated class and in connection with scholarly and scientific arguments, and this is even leaving aside the role of traditional Islamic scholarship, which, even if usually acknowledged rather as an “object” of academic inquiry, claims for itself the authority of the true knowledge nevertheless. Hence, it is now appropriate to discuss the connection of the discourse with the realm of “knowledge” more systematically.

In the first part of this chapter (6.1), which will follow up with the histories recounted in the previous three, I will show that the appropriation of the discourse and its support by academia played (along with the institutions) a significant role in its circulation, especially by establishing a network and providing a platform for a debate, but equally as well by endowing the discourse with legitimacy. At the same time, it was on these academic platforms that the discourse finally became a subject of study and reflection as a phenomenon. This aspect will be addressed in the second part of this chapter (6.2), where a question will be posed: in which manner is “Islam and the environment” framed and evaluated in contemporary academia, and what are the possibilities of its further inquiry?

## **6.1 Mapping the History of Academic Interventions**

As already largely evident, academic reflection has played a specific role in the emergence of the Islamic discourse on the environment. This can be related to the fact that already since White's (1967) primeval comment on the relationship between ecology and religion, academicians started to consider and, in many cases, accept what has been described already in the introduction (see 1.1.1.a) as the "primordialist" assumption about the inherent ethical posture toward nature ensuing from the teachings and practices of given traditions. As it should be now clear, such a perspective has a peculiar implication. Because it replicates the basic structure of the discourse, namely the assumption that there is a particular *truth* regarding the relationship between Islam (or other faiths) and the environment (cf. 2.1.1), it effectively meshes and intermingles with the discourse as such. This overlap and intersection is partly the reason for the somewhat complicated methodology and terminology applied in this work. This serves, among other things, the purpose of distinguishing the particular truth searched in this work (which focuses on the description of the discourse and views the primordialist thesis with a measure of skepticism) from the truth thematized within the discourse (which must be, it will be again yet argued, considered as essentially outside of the scientific purview). For this reason, it is thus now time to assess this *academic intervention* in a critical manner and in the context of its interaction with the discourse and its influence on it.

### **6.1.1 Returning to the Age of Early New Environmentalism: The Religion and Ecology Debate**

The academic adaptation of the Islamic discourse on the environment can be arguably best conceived as, at least initially, developing around a particular academic tradition (cf. Paden 1988). This returns already to the early debate on religion and environmentalism in the US, and progressively acquired also a

specific label of „Religion and Ecology.“<sup>160</sup> Because it has played a crucial role in the development of the specific sub-branch (or even independent branch) of what eventually became a field of „Islam and ecology,“ it is useful first to recount its genesis—and eventually also the inclusion of Islam into the debate in its later stages.

#### 6.1.1.a *The Origins of the Academic Tradition*

To track the history of the academic debate on Islam and the environment, it is first necessary, not unlike in previous cases, to take a broader perspective beyond the Islamic tradition and identity. This means returning nowhere else than to the already mentioned Lynn White’s article published in 1967. As already stressed, the publication of the American medievalist is generally credited with introducing the theme of religion into the environmentalist debate. While in one of the previous chapters (see 3.1; 3.3), I have used it mainly as a means of comparison to highlight a peculiar perspective and structure of argumentation appearing in Muslim authors’ texts, at this place, it is necessary to focus on its more direct intellectual influence. Indeed, the reception of White’s article established the tradition of academic debate on “religion and ecology” to which Islam was later incorporated as a particular field of inquiry.

White’s article elicited its complex response in intellectual and academic circles (for an early example of this debate following up with arguments by White and Toynbee, see Spring and Spring eds. 1974). In general, the debate progressively developed from the critique of the religious traditions (especially the monotheistic ones’) purported anthropocentrism and „guilt“ for the environmental degradation (White 1967; Toynbee 1972) to the relatively widespread acclaim for their (now unveiled and acknowledged) pro-environmental substance and potential to provide ethical guidance for the fighting of ecological crisis. As it is evident, the academic environments underwent a development similar to the appreciation of religious influence on the part of some ENGOs. Arguably, this must be related to the general tendency of reevaluation of

---

<sup>160</sup> It is useful to point out that this particular context of the Islamic discourse on environment is extensively covered by Donatella Vincenti in her dissertation (see 2017), where it is also used as a main analytic lens.

the “secularization thesis” as described above. This development must be, among other things, attributed to the activity of the representatives of religion themselves. As mentioned (see 3.3.1), White’s accusation of Christianity led to a counter-argument from the side of evangelical protestants (Schaeffer 1970). Similarly, in 1971, the theme of the environment (even if without direct reference to White’s work) first appeared in the papal encyclical *Octogesima Adveniens* (see Pope Paul VI 1971), and over the following years and decades, many other theologians and individual representatives of Christianity and other religious traditions consciously developed responses to and evaluations of the theme of the environment.

One of the most influential ones was Thomas Berry, a catholic priest and historian of religion (embracing a specialization in East Asian traditions of Confucianism and Buddhism) who, in the 1960s and 1970s, participated in the development of the academic study of world religions in the US (see e.g. Grim and Tucker 2010). In 1978, Berry published in the journal *Teilhard Studies*, which he himself established as a president of the American Teilhard Association, an influential essay, „The New Story, “ in which he called for Christian theology (and the Western worldview more generally) to strive for and embrace a new cosmological perspective which would include the large communion with the material world, earth and cosmos into consideration and transcend what Berry described as the impasse (see Berry [1978] 2003). Through his position as an academician devoted to the study of other traditions, Berry was also sensitive to reflecting on their heritage and facilitating a broader dialogue. At the same time, the debate was also animated by the emergence of the field of environmental ethics (which, by the very nature of the subject, had to account for different sources of ethics and morality) and the overall broadening of the environmentalist discourse in academia and beyond through the adoption and reflection on the feminist, deep ecology and other perspectives (cf. Vincenti 2017, xxvii—xxviii). This also gradually led to the de facto institutionalization of the *problematique* in the academia, which, although its bulk took place only in the 2000s, began already in 1993 when the Religion and Ecology Group of the American Academy of Religion was created by David Barnhill and Eugene Bianchi (Vincenti 2017, xxxi). Over the following two decades, these efforts, except for generating an

extensive and complex debate (a specific kind of an academic discourse) gave birth to what is by several authors identified as a specific field—the “religion and ecology” field. Its further development may be now illustrated by the process of incorporation of Islam in it.

#### 6.1.1.b *Islam in the Early Debate*

As it has already been partly made evident, the initial debate revolved mainly around the role and legacy of Christianity (even though Toynbee in 1972 ruminated about the progressive role of Eastern traditions; see Toynbee 1972), and Islam was not a part of it. Thus, still in 1984, Manzoor could complain that Islam was left out of the discussion and bunched together with other religions under the header of “monotheism” (Manzoor 1984, 154). This, though, had already begun to change. In 1981, in one of the early issues of the *Environmental Ethics* journal founded by Eugene Hargrove in 1979, appeared an article by Iqtidar H. Zaidi, a Pakistani geographer from the University of Karachi educated at the Syracuse University and researching environmental issues including the role of values and perception in land use in the Pakistani context from the 1970s (see e.g. Zaidi 1976), called „On the Ethics of Man’s Interaction with the Environment: An Islamic Approach“ (see 1981). In the article, Zaidi, in a manner similar to Manzoor, picks up the threads of the debate initiated by White and Toynbee and also other environmental ethicists; he also, in a similar manner, argues that „Islam provides us with a useful religious matrix for developing proper ethical principles because it provides a formula for the improvement of human well-being within the theomorphic framework“ (Zaidi 1981, 37). He discusses a familiar repertoire of themes from *tawhīd* and *khilāfa* to *āyāt*—overall, the idea of man’s responsibility for the state of the environment entrusted to him by God is the central one, together with hints to the perfect accommodation of earth for human needs (cf. Zaidi 1981, 41–44). Zaidi also presented the theme at the First Islamic Geographical Conference in Riyadh in January 1979 (Zaidi 1981, 35). In 1986, the article was reprinted in the volume on *Religion and Environmental Crisis* edited by E. Hargrove, which, probably as one of the first publications, juxtaposed views of various traditions presented by their adherents. Although the stress was

still put mainly on Christianity, essays on classical polytheism, Native American faiths, and Taoism appeared along with Islam (Hargrove 1986).

In a series of similar comparative works which apparently gained popularity and began to be issued at a growing pace, the representation of Islam varies. In 1990, a conference on „Spirit and Nature“ at Middlebury College was convened by Steven Rockefeller (cf. Vincenti 2017, xxx), which hosted, among others, the Tibetan Buddhist leader Dalai Lama and invited S. H. Nasr as a representative of the Islamic view (Goldman 1990). Two years later, the conference proceedings were published under the title *Spirit and Nature: Why the Environment Is a Religious Issue* (Rockefeller and Elder eds. 1992), including Nasr’s contribution, elaborating on his already thoroughly discussed ideas (Nasr 1992).

Not always was Islam, however, represented by an “authentic” or “indigenous” voice or represented at all. In the acclaimed book by Charlene Spretnak, *States of Grace: The Recovery of Meaning in the Post-Modern Age* (1991), which discussed the relevance of spiritual traditions of Buddhism, Native American religions, Judaism, and Christianity for, among others, also ecological concerns, Islam was omitted. Two years later, an edited volume, *Worldviews and Ecology*, was issued by two scholars from Bucknell University, who would later play an important role in propping up the “religion and ecology” discourse in American academia, Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim (1993). The volume covered a span of traditions from the native ones, Judaism, and Christianity to East Asian ones (as well as a chapter on ecofeminism by Spretnak) and also included Islam. Yet remarkably, the writing of a chapter on Islam was not undertaken by a Muslim scholar or laic commentator but by Roger E. Timm, an American Lutheran pastor and professor of religion at Carthage College (Timm 1993). From a current perspective, this must be seen as extraordinary, as the elaboration of the “ecothology” of Islam would probably hardly be accepted from a Christian pastor as valid today (even if this pattern is typical for the whole volume and also evidenced in other cases in the period), creating a situation of “superimposition” of an outsider’s opinion on the given tradition (and this is even though the contribution quotes works of I. Zaidi, P. Manzoor and M. Izzi Dien). The wording of Timm’s chapter partly reflects this awkward situation, like in the

case when the author asks, “what attitudes [...] are *implied* by the belief in Allah as a Creator in the Islamic religious tradition?” (Timm 1993, 83; my emphasis). Timm stresses especially the theme of God’s sovereignty (ibid., 85) over the creation (shared with Christianity) and subsequently focuses on other motives, mainly the “devotional” (signifying God’s power and goodness) and practical (serving human needs) aspects of creation, and the relations of hierarchy or equality among human and non-human parts of the creation, not least in the light of the concept of *khilāfa* (ibid., 86–89). Upon that, he draws a conclusion, which is arguably more ambiguous than most of the responses coming from the adherents of the tradition, pointing out that either anthropocentric and instrumental or responsible and caring attitude can be derived from the Qur’an and hadith, depending on the aspects stressed (this ambiguity holds to a certain degree even for the notion of *khilāfa*; see ibid., 89–90). Unsurprisingly, the chapter by the American pastor does not figure among texts usually quoted in the later discourse. It also aptly illustrates the implicit problem with the primordialist assumption: a definite version of the given “primordial” ecotheological interpretation must ultimately be underpinned by a personal authority. Otherwise, it may not be perceived as credible.

Along with that, the early “religion and ecology” debate produced another interesting experiment, namely in a similar comparative work by Baird R. Callicot, one of the founders of the field of environmental ethics (Callicot [1994] 1997). Somewhat uniquely, the American philosopher set out to cover all of the traditions analyzed in his book on his own. Callicot draws on the work of I. Zaidi as „the first contemporary Islamic scholar to assess the environmental values and attitudes embedded in the Quran“ (1997, 31). This is obviously wrong as he, remarkably, omits Nasr from his account, which may also serve as evidence of the still fragmented structure of the religion and ecology discourse. Although the heroic effort to cover an enormous landscape of world religious and ethical traditions leads to a measure of brevity in Callicot’s account, his focus on the comparative dimension still brings forward some interesting insights. Similarly to Timm, Callicot points out the ambiguity of the Qur’anic treatment of the man-nature relationship, noting that “man’s dominion over the earth and the subordination of the creation to man is consistently spelled out in the Quran in no



uncertain terms” (Callicot [1994] 1997, 31). At the same time, drawing on Zaidi and still other authors (e.g., Izzi Dien), he subsequently tames this opinion by discussing the ethical principles (*khilāfa*, *āyāt*, but also the social principle of justice) that qualify (or may do so) man’s conduct on the earth as one subservient to the tenet of stewardship (35–36). Somewhat symptomatically and similarly to Timm’s case, Callicot’s “outsider” assessment and his thought-provoking arguments have been mostly left out of the further debate.

Again, in contrast, in David Kinsley’s edited collection *Ecology and Religion: Ecological Spirituality in a Cross-Cultural Perspective* (1995), elaborating on various native traditions, Hinduism, Chinese traditions, Christianity, and still other linkages (deep ecology, ecofeminism), Islam is absent. This is, however, not the case in *Population, Consumption and the Environment: Religious and Secular Responses*, edited by Harold Coward, a Canadian scholar of religion focusing, among other things, on its contemporary ethical relevance (Coward 1995). The specificity of the volume, which covered a familiar selection of traditions, lies in its stress on the population question. The Islamic perspective on the theme was elaborated on by Nawal Ammar, an anthropologist and sociologist specializing in criminology and gender justice, while also publishing on topics of Islam and religious attitudes to various social problems. Ammar’s text is, as the other early examples, specific. Upon framing her chapter as “an Islamic answer” to the environmental and population question and beginning with a relativizing caveat related to the diversity of Islam, the Islamic world, and sources of normative authority within it (Ammar 1995a, 123–126), the author relatively unequivocally states that Islamic view of population control is a “negative” one (i.e., natalist [127–128]). Yet significantly, Ammar also juxtaposes this view with the more general Islamic environmental ethics, which she presents as essentially conservationist—an elaboration that is grounded in a (unusually comprehensive at the time) selection of previously published texts (including the *Islamic Principles* [Bakader et al. 1983], essays from the volume of Khalid and O’Brien [1992] in addition to studies of Nasr and Izzi Dien). Upon this basis, Ammar exhorts a “sensitive” and “inclusive” discussion on the matter of population (Ammar 1995a, 127–128) as well as the reexamination of their own tradition on the part of Muslims (135). In this sense, Ammar’s text is more critical than most others. It is

also worth mentioning that the author contributed her views to other similar collections issued in the aughts (see, e.g., Ammar 1995b; 2001; 2003) even though she did not subsequently continue her engagement within the discourse and nor built a strong personal identity of “Islamic environmentalist.”

This all makes it evident that the interest in the religions’ intersection with ecological issues steadily rose after the mid-1980s. Together with that, what was originally a debate on the purported ecological “sin” of Christianity and the religious sources of inconsiderate anthropocentrism progressively gained different parameters. Religions, not unlike in the more practically conservationist cycles, begun to be regarded as a potential source of valuable ethical values that could be used to generate a comprehensive moral argument to advocate for the protection of the biosphere—one suited for a world that ceased to be thought as destined for universal secularity but rather as populated by a plurality of views, both secular and religious ones derived from a variety of spiritual and ideological traditions. In this respect, the so-called “world religions” (a concept that came under criticism later) came to be perceived as worthy of investigation, as the surge in publications of the early 1990s shows. What is also evident is that the inclusion of Islam within this discourse was initially somewhat tentative. One of the problems seems to be that the “Islamic view” had to be extracted from somewhere in a situation wherein there were few established speakers who could convey it. The early authors and editors followed different strategies in this regard. They either could draw on “indigenous” voices (in some cases, the names already active in the discourse, i.e., Zaidi; in other new ones, i.e., Ammar) or elaborate such view by themselves, with the help of the still relatively tiny textual base and their own analysis and consideration. In some cases, they omitted Islam from their discussion altogether. As it has been shown, some of these early contributions stand out by attempting to approach the theme critically, either by conceding the inherent ambiguity of the “ethical position” of Islam or at least by an acknowledgment that the Islamic ethics of the environment needs to be construed from the scriptural sources. This reflexive attitude would later vanish from many other texts.

Overall, it can also be observed that the academic discourse initially lagged behind the effort in conservationist and institutional areas, which managed to produce a richer textual corpus and denser social networks at the time. This

would, though, change around the verge of the millennium with a single project at Harvard University, which finally succeeded in creating a productive forum to which multiple Muslim voices could contribute and transform the debate on the “Islamic view” of the environment into the shape of a self-standing branch of academic discourse.

### **6.1.2 The Emancipation of the “Islam and the Environment” Field and its Further Development**

Between 1996 and 1998, the Center for the Study of World Religions (CSWR) at Harvard (affiliated with the Harvard Divinity School), headed by Lawrence E. Sullivan, realized a major project which has proven to be an important event for the field. Over a three-year period, CSWR launched a series of conferences and related research activities focused on world religions and ecology with the participation of over 800 scholars and representatives of religious traditions. This eventually resulted in the publication of the *Religions of the World and Ecology* book series by Harvard University Press in 1997–2003, with Mary Evelin Tucker and John Grim as series editors (see Tucker and Grimm, n.d.a). Based on the prior conferences, nine edited volumes were eventually published covering Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Daoism, Hinduism, Indigenous traditions, Islam, Jainism, and Judaism, each comprising a collection of essays by representatives of the given tradition and scholars active in related fields.

In this regard, the Harvard project followed the path of the WWF-sponsored World Religions and Ecology series (represented by Khalid and O'Brien 1992 in the case of Islam) but surpassed it in the scope, volume, and complexity of the published material. The conference and the collection of essays that emerged from it played a significant role in the dissemination, popularization, and entrenchment of “Islam and ecology” as a global discourse. The conference on *Islam and Ecology*, which was organized at Harvard between May 7 and 10, 1998, was the first necessary prerequisite for this process.

### 6.1.2.a *The Conference*

The conference must be viewed from a couple of perspectives as a watershed event. With the most probability, it was the first conference of this kind and proportions, preceding meetings both in Jeddah (2000) and Teheran (2001; see 4.2). In contrast to other previous meetings (e.g., the 1990 Middlebury College conference or the events organized by the WWF), it was devoted solely to Islam, thanks to the size of the whole project. Overall, the organizers succeeded in bringing about 50 participants into the venue. Most of them were Muslims and posed as representatives of the Islamic tradition. The organizers also succeeded in establishing a measure of diversity. The participants may be classed into several categories.

In the first place, the organizers were apparently eager to engage speakers with previous credentials in addressing the topic. This effort largely succeeded. S. H. Nasr attended the conference and gave a plenary speech. Two authors connected to the IUCN-sponsored 1983 paper and Saudi conservationist establishment also appeared: M. Izzi-Dien (who was also an emerging independent author in the field; see 4.2.1.a; 5.1.1.b) and Othman Llewellyn as well as A. M. Naseef, the author of the 1986 Assisi Declaration. Added to them may be Fazlun Khalid, the co-editor of the already mentioned 1992 WWF-sponsored volume (see Khalid and O'Brien 1992) and emerging leading activist of Islamic environmentalism in his own right (5.1.1.a). Notably, Khalid was also credited for his assistance in organizing the conference (cf. Foltz, Denny, and Baharuddin 2003, vi)<sup>161</sup> and gave, along with a thematic contribution, a plenary address on it (YFRE n.d.a). Together with him, Yassin Dutton, the contributor to Khalid and O'Brien's 1992 volume, attended too. For other already-known authors, Nawal Ammar can be mentioned. In this sense, the conference involved most of the hitherto active commentators on "Islam and the environment" and, in many cases, authors who probably did not meet to discuss the matter before.

This list was supplemented by other names that have not yet been mentioned, mainly because they had not visibly contributed to the discourse (and may not have been interested in the theme either). They can still be divided into

---

<sup>161</sup> Presumably, Khalid may have contributed, among other things, by mobilizing his personal network of authors-activists and thus widening the attendance of non-European participants.

two groups. The first comprised Muslim speakers of different vocations and institutional affiliations. Most of them were academicians specialized in various fields spanning from engineering, urban planning, architecture, agriculture, and economics up to history, linguistics, religious studies, law, and anthropology; the list at the same time included professionals from NGOs, an employee of UNESCO, and a member of the Pakistani parliament. The second group and the last category of participants consisted of a group of non-Muslim academicians, representing especially the fields of Islamic/Middle Eastern studies and religious studies; this included Tucker and Grim as the organizers of the conference and still a couple of other personalities like S. Rockefeller (the co-editor of the 1992 collection on religion and environment and one of the central coordinators of the process of drafting of the *Earth Charter*) who in some cases served as moderators and chaired the individual thematic sessions (see YFRE n.d.a).

The conference was structured into seven basic thematic sessions, namely “Science, Environment, and Islam,” “The Creational Balance and Environmental Responsibility,” “Islamic Law and Environmental Ethics within Islam,” “Islamic Principles and the Generation of Wealth,” “Development Models within Islam,” “Women and Ecology in Islam,” “Islamic Aesthetics in the Natural and Constructed Worlds” (see YFRE n.d.a). The themes of contributions varied significantly. While some of the participants focused, largely in the fashion we have already seen, on the articulation of various versions of Islamic “ecotheology,” still others treated more traditionally academic and empirically-based questions—and in many of the cases, the two approaches were combined. Thematically, prisms of art, history, philosophy, law, architecture and urban planning, gender relations, science and technology, economics and finance, and, not least, development were included. Some of the speakers focused on describing the “environmental situation” on the ground (like M. Awang for Malaysia) or presenting projects and activities of their organizations (like the Saudi Arabian Wildlife Authority or Aga Khan Development Network). Finally, Richard Foltz from the Department of Religion at Columbia University and a specialist on Mughal India delivered a contribution called “Islamic environmentalism: A Matter of Interpretation,” trying to assess the Islam-environment intersection from an academic and critical viewpoint. I will still return to it more than once.

Taken together, personal profiles of the conference attendees create a picture of a broad forum with various speakers. Still, the employment of specific criteria may provide a more critical assessment that points towards a distinct selectivity in creating the collective body summoned to represent and discuss the “Islamic view.” Perhaps not surprisingly, the event, organized on the academic ground, was filled up by people tied primarily to academic institutions. With some exceptions like Khalid or Saudi-based professionals, the preponderance of the attendees were actively pursuing academic careers or did so along with their other commitments. A second notable sign may be the geographic background of the participants. Even though the conference strived to create a semblance of diversity and inclusivity, most of the attendees came from the US or other Western academic institutions. Only a minority represented universities or institutions in non-Western Muslim majority countries. Of the fifty or so attending, there were three academicians from Malaysia, two from Pakistan, one from Kenya, one from Nigeria, two from India, one from Bangladesh, and two from Turkey. Added to that may be Llewellyn, Naseef, and Abdulaziz H. Abuzinada (Secretary General of the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development of Saudi Arabia) as representatives of the Saudi governmental and academic establishment (see YFRE n.d.b.). Eventually, the most telling indicator of the structure of the attendance at the conference is education. With only a few exceptions of graduates and academicians from Aligarh and Turkish faculties, the conference was attended by holders of academic degrees (mostly Ph.D.) from the Western (predominantly US and many of the Ivy League) universities. In fact, it would be hard to find anyone not affiliated with Western academia, with many of the attendees holding rather high-up positions.<sup>162</sup>

Conceivably, these facets cannot be blamed on the organizers. The fact that stems from the aforementioned analysis, namely that the conference represented rather a limited elite discourse, can be best explained by two concomitant circumstances. The first relates to the overall orientation of the

---

<sup>162</sup> It is perhaps also worth mentioning that the event was supported by the Agha Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC, a part of the Agha Khan Development Network, AKDN), a foundation established and largely financed by British-Portuguese businessman and philanthropist, and simultaneously the 49th imam of Nizari-Isma'ili branch of Shi'a Agha Khan IV (cf. Foltz, Baharuddin and Denny 2003, v; see also Schwencke 2012, 18). Overall, five of the participants of the conference were affiliated with AKTC-related philanthropic activities; AKTC manager Tom Kessinger also delivered a plenary address.

“religion and ecology” debate from which the whole initiative was born. In this debate, the whole matter was, from its outset, approached from an expert-centered and mainly theoretical perspective. In other words, the academic interest in the question (and this can be said already about Nasr’s foundational discourse) revolved around the issue of concepts like anthropocentrism, stewardship, and legal and ethical norms considered to be in causal relationship with human agency. As these concepts were deemed crucial and their meaning within the given tradition was supposed to be largely essentially ingrained, the question of who relates and presents such concepts was not at the fore of the debate. This issue was subjected to a critique only later (Bauman, Bohannon, and O’Brian 2011a; Gade 2019).

The second explanation may comprise the apparent lack of suitable voices that could be identified and invited. As this chapter has already made evident and as it will be yet shown, the environmental discourse still did not exist in Islam as a widely established and circulated in the mid-1990s, and neither was there a significant grassroots movement into which the organizers could tap to bring in a more representative collective voice of Muslims—this situation only began to change at the time (see 5.1.1.b).

In this sense, the whole event must be viewed as more than successful in assembling the actors who were “available” and connecting them to still others who were not active before—this all across a relatively wide geographic span. On the other hand, this necessarily means that the whole academic enterprise engaged in the “construction” of the “Islam and the environment” discourse. And in fact, the role of the whole project in this regard cannot be overstated. This was facilitated by putting the outcomes of the conference into print in a publication that would gain (and still enjoy) the status of a virtual reference book within the whole field.

#### 6.1.2.b *The 2003 Volume and Beyond*

The conference was undoubtedly important, but it would not have played such a significant role if it had not been for the ensuing activities, especially the publications. The first came out in 2001 when a special issue of the prestigious

American Academy of Arts journal *Daedalus* was devoted to the theme of religion and ecology, prefaced by M. E. Tucker and J. Grim and staging (largely along the pattern described in the initial section) essays of about a dozen of authors on the problem: third of them “secular” environmentalists and experts and the rest speaking on behalf of each of the selected “world religions.” Islam was represented by an essay by the Pakistani scholar Nomanul Haq (see Haq 2001). Nevertheless, it was not until two years later that the conference's primary and most notable outcome came out: a volume explicitly focused on Islam and ecology, which was, along with volumes devoted to other selected traditions, the main intended result of the encounter.

The volume was finally issued in 2003 by Harvard University Press under the title *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*.<sup>163</sup> The editorship of the volume was entrusted to the already mentioned Richard C. Foltz as well as to the professor of Islamic studies and the history of religions at Boulder, Colorado, Frederick M. Denny, and Azizan Baharuddin, the professor of science and technology studies at the University of Malaysia (see Foltz, Denny, and Baharuddin 2003).

In its extent and scope, the book surpassed anything previously published on “Islam and the environment.” It comprised a total of 23 thematic contributions by 25 authors supplemented by a bibliography on Islam and ecology, all on almost 600 pages. Most contributors came from the 1998 conference, with few other names added. The book was divided into five thematic parts. The first two, called “God, Humans, and Nature” and “The Challenge of (Re)Interpretation,” staged the largely normative expositions of the general Islamic ethico-religious view in both “legalist” (represented mainly by Llewellyn and Izzi-Dien) and “philosophico-ethical” (represented by Nasr and still others) colorings plus a more critical and detached rumination by R. Foltz presented already at the 1998 conference. The latter three then focused on more specific questions, namely “Environment and Social Justice,” “Sustainable Society,” and finally, three chapters devoted to the phenomena of the Islamic garden as a “Metaphor for Paradise.” Following the already established pattern, the book also combined the programmatic-Islamic and more academic and empirically oriented

---

<sup>163</sup> The subtitle refers to the Qur’anic term *amāna*, a „trust“ accepted by man, identified in the Islamic environmental discourse mainly with the „trust of nature“ (see 2.2.2.f).



pronouncements (see e.g. the study on Rumi by Clarke [2003; see also Jabra and Jabra 2003; Petruccioli 2003]). The primacy and significance must be, though, given to the former.

The sheer scope of the volume hardly allows for discussing its content in sufficient detail. Therefore, I will limit myself to some distinct traits. The first is the fact that the volume, if mainly just through the introductory chapter by R. Foltz, relates itself to the previous Islamic discourse on the matter. Foltz states that “the articulation of an Islamic environmental ethics in contemporary terms—recognizing the urgency of the global crisis now facing us all—is quite new” (Foltz 2003, xxxvii). He subsequently traces the origins of the discourse from Nasr and points out the primacy of the 1998 Harvard conference while also mentioning three other titles (Ahmed 1997; Abdel Haleem 1998; and Izzi Dien 2000; see also 5.1.1). At the same time, Foltz attempts to point out the novelty of the discourse, programmatically situating it in contrast to the “approach to conservation seen in the West” characteristic of organizations like IUCN and WWF, which is “the product of a particular culture (mainly White North American),” and calling the perspective of the contributors to the volume, in turn, “un-Western” (Foltz 2003, xxxiv).

This statement, which again highlights the role of identity in conceptualizing the discourse (cf. 5.3), can be though viewed as ironic as it hardly stands a couple of facts exposed above—namely that the Islamic discourse on the environment was significantly formed by the activities of the two organizations which provided the platforms for and in some cases initiated the articulation of it, and that the actual authors of the discourse were almost invariably tied to the Western environmentalism in some of its forms (being trained in environment-related academic specializations, being confronted with the activism and institutional intervention developed within that very “particular culture”) under the light of which they adapted and reformulated the Islamic Qur’anic concepts to fit with the “Western” categories of environmental ethics, sustainable development and conservation. After all, many of the authors in the volume quote the 1983 IUCN-sponsored Principles and the Asissi Declaration and derive their arguments from them. The volume (and this also holds for the ensuing academic discourse) omits the already emerging comments of the Arab-Muslim authors on

the matter, ones which are much more unconventional and could be more readily called “un-Western” (see 5.1.2)—but which could also conceivably stay short of conforming with the particular way of presenting „Islam and the environment“ preferred by the editors.

As for the content of the programmatic chapters, which are titled variously as attempts to formulate the “environmental law,” or “environmental ethics” of Islam or a “theory” of and “model” for Islam and the environment, it confirms the trend already evidenced in the publications investigated in the previous two sections, namely the sedimentation of the key concepts of the virtual catechism (see 2.2.1) from which a repertoire of arguments is derived. This includes the Qur’anic terms of *khilāfa*, *amāna*, *mīzān*, *āyāt*, *fasād*, concepts from *fiqh* and shari’a and a set of quotations from hadith and in some cases also historical examples (see 2.2.2.). Generally, the authors either argue for cultural and epistemological reform which would change the values of the society (e.g., Nasr 2003, Özdemir 2003) or for a practical application of Islamic injunctions in the field of legislation and social regulation (without, however, going into much detail about the concrete forms of such application [Llewellyn 2003]). There is no dispute that the Harvard volume further elaborates this repertoire of concepts and arguments, thanks to the broad congregation of authors.

What the 2003 Harvard volume effectively did in the first place was that it provided a platform for a group of Muslim speakers on the Islam-environment intersection and enabled them to pronounce their respective theologies in one place. The volume included all already established important authors and activists like Nasr, Izzi-Dien, Llewellyn, and Khalid and brought their disparate networks and perspectives on the theme together; in addition to that, it supplemented this group with new names and institutional links through the inclusion of, e.g., Aslam Parvaiz, Ibrahim Özdemir (see also 5.1.4.d), Nomanul Haq and scholars from South-Asian universities. Through representing a considerable variety of views, which was presented on a relatively prestigious (with all the contested meaning of this concept) platform, in dialogue with the “secular” scholarship, and above all, as a part of a major academic project with universalist overtones, the book eventually achieved what it aspired: to become the hitherto most comprehensive and simultaneously authoritative source on “Islam and the environment.” By that,

it may be seen, especially in global terms, as more successful than most other forms of promotion of the Islamic environmental discourse, from the institutional to “activist.” Its impact may be seen as follows.

The first one is the sedimentation of the discourse, which gained legitimacy as an academic theme. It established “Islam and environment” as a standard academic subject (or even field). It put forward a pattern of circulating Islamic environmental theologies—and that is in the shape and kind characteristic of the previous development of the discourse—in academic literature of various kinds (meanwhile, this pattern was already evolving along some other independent lines, as it will be yet discussed, but the Harvard volume definitely cemented this trend). The volume plays a singular role in the whole discourse in terms of the number of quotations. It created a reference book that became the standard source for basic research and understanding of the topic and enabled future authors to draw inspiration and authority for their ensuing statements from it. This concerns not only academicians but also activists outside academia focused on advocacy or direct action. In fact, in most of the texts on “Islam and the environment,” which appeared after 2003, there is at least one contribution from the volume cited. Finally, the publication, translated into Turkish in 2005 and Arabic in 2008 (cf Schwencke 2012, 18), may have well contributed to the proliferation of the discourse even more than other texts. But this is—as in the previous cases—hard to measure and establish.

The second important impact is the creation of an established group of voices and “experts” on the matter. The Harvard conference and the publication of the ensuing volume created a new kind of network that served as a basis for other conferences and publication projects and on which also other institutions actively promoting the Islamic framing of environmental activism (like ARC) could draw. For some authors, their participation in the Harvard project signified their entry into the discourse. Actually, the establishment of “Islam and environment” as a serious and important academic theme enabled both the established and new authors to pursue their careers by promoting the theme and further developing it. A case in point may be Ibrahim Özdemir, whose career has already been discussed as an example of the locally embedded global network of academicians and activists (5.1.4.d). The same may also hold for Richard Foltz, who, by co-editing

the volume, acquired his longer-term (though now aborted) interest in the issue, resulting in the publication of other important titles (Foltz 2005a, 2006) as well as other participants on the whole enterprise (with a caveat that not all authors, however, remained active in the discourse).

Except for these positive contributions to the development of „Islam and ecology,“ the Harvard conference and the 2003 volume, however, stood at the roots of another trait, which may be viewed as less positive and has been debated already in the introductory chapter (1.1.1.a). This is the lack of critical debate and contestation within the discourse. No authors included in the collection, for example, raised doubts about the central presupposition of the whole intellectual enterprise, namely that religion can meaningfully affect the man-nature relationship and that religious identity plays an extraordinary role in regulating this relationship. This lack of criticism will be further discussed as a particularly limiting factor in the development of the field.

### 6.1.2.c *The Generic Academic Discourse*

The completion of the above-described Harvard project comprising of issuing not only the *Islam and Ecology* volume covered in detail but volumes devoted to other traditions contributed to the development of the study of the religion-environment intersection but even more to the consolidation, integration, and circulation of the Islamic discourse on the environment and it may be well legitimate to call it watershed (Amin 2003, xxxiii; cf. Schwencke 2012, 18). At the same time, it achieved yet another thing: the development of a specific *academic* field of “Islam and the environment,” which is significant for one simple reason: it holds the epistemologically privileged and hegemonic position in establishing what the connection actually means. As such, in its great majority, it produced the literature (and in others, it influenced it) that stood at the very outset of this work (see 1.1.1).

The institutional structure and outreach of this field are described, e.g., in the study by Bauman, Bohannon, and O’Brien (see 2011b, 6–9), being represented, among other things, by working groups or bodies on sub-organizational level of major academic associations of religious studies (like

American Academy of Religion and others), the existence of independent associations for the study of religion and ecology (to mention but one example: International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture; ISSRNC), the existence of specialized journals (like the *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* published by ISSRNC) and finally also existence of degrees specializing in the field (e.g., the program in Religion and Nature at the University of Florida). The scope and activities in the field, supported by the robust academic infrastructure in the US, are also reflected, e.g., by Chaplin (2016).

To exemplify the further development of the field, it is possible to mention the 2008 *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Nature* (see Taylor and Kaplan 2008 ed.), presenting an attempt to establish a reference handbook for a discourse that now had more than 30 years of tradition. In this regard, it must be seen as a successful endeavor and a useful source for any researcher who is interested in the questions connected to the field.<sup>164</sup> The encyclopedia provided an ample forum for the presentation of the hitherto developed theologies and theories (and, in fact, the fragments of the Islamic environmental catechism). It contains, in total, 21 contributions explicitly devoted to Islam and Islamic discourse, and the tradition appears in some way or another in many more. The specific contributions comprise thematic parts (like on Islam and environmental ethics and Islam and post-anthropocentrism, Qur'an, hadith etc.) and a few historical parts (about Rumi, Ibn 'Arabi, or ecological activism in contemporary Iran). The encyclopedia also presents profiles of Mawil Izzi Dien and S. H. Nasr as representatives of contemporary Islamic environmental thinking (see Foltz 2008b)<sup>165</sup> and a profile of IFEES as an example of an Islamic environmental organization (see Khalid 2008b). If we focus on the thematic side, the articles published in the encyclopedia contain familiar topics largely consistent with the emerging „catechism“ of the discourse—from the general concepts like *khilāfa* and *mīzān* to the environmental application of Islamic law. At the same time, the encyclopedia

preserves a certain plurality in attitudes as it, for example, presents the theme of

164 Even conceding its limitations like remaining „locked in“ the particular stage of the discourse, as it should be evident also from this study regarding Islam. As already recalled, significant critiques began to be raised against the overall orientation of the debate on the scripturalist treatment of the whole question of religion and ecology focused on quasi-essential features of given traditions (see Bauman, Bohannon, and O'Brian 2011). Despite that, the encyclopedia, thanks to its breadth, also contains many entries that are of lasting actuality and relevance.

165 Izzi Dien is here characterized as one of the „very few contemporary Islamic thinkers to make the environment a central concern“ (Foltz 2008a).

Islam and the environment through the prism of both „environmental ethics,“ „man and nature“ relationship, „eco-justice,“ and „post-anthropocentrism“ (among still others; for the respective entries see Wescoat 2008; Parvaiz 2008a; Ammal 2008; Afrasiabi 2008). Each perspective thus provides a distinct interpretation of the key Islamic concepts, which often overlap. As in most other academic productions on the topic, there are no entries assessing the environmental policy of Muslim states. Among the authors are the well-known personalities of Islamic environmental discourse, typically also connected to the Harvard RWE Project. At the same time, the author contributing the largest number of entries is Richard Foltz, arguably the most proficient „secular“ academician devoted to the study of the “Islam and the environment” intersection. He is also the author of the umbrella entry on „Islam“ (see Foltz 2008b). What is useful to note is that the encyclopedia is, though, not widely cited within the Islamic discourse on the environment, in distinction to briefer and much more popular collections like that of Khalid and O'Brien (1992) and Foltz, Denny, and Baharuddin (2003). This may be perhaps logical in light of its general focus on all the different religious traditions as well as its genre.

Along with that, it is significant to stress that not all academic production on Islam and the environment emerged in relation to Grimm and Tucker's project or the Religion and Ecology field sponsored (mainly) by the US academic establishment. Other independent publications occurred in parallel, occasionally before the Harvard University project, like the already quoted early text of Zaidi (1981) or the relatively frequently cited article by Soumaya Pernilla Ouis, a researcher in human ecology from Lund University, Sweden (see Ouis 1998), but especially and with progressively growing intensity thereafter. A host of these publications reached their readership, again, through collections on “religion and ecology.” In 2001, an attempt was made to connect the discourse on religion and ecology to the field of *deep ecology* (see Barnhill and Gottlieb 2001).<sup>166</sup> Other contributions and collections were issued by Gottlieb over the following years (Gottlieb 2004; 2006a; 2006b), and still others were edited by Gardner (2006), Taylor (2010), Jenkins, Tucker, and Grimm (2016), Brunn (2015) Hart (2017) Hartman (2018), Sherma and Bilimoria (2022). Most of them were issued by

---

<sup>166</sup> In 2007, the Malay scholar and commentator on Islam and ecology Adi Setia issued another paper conceiving the „Islamic deep ecology“ (Setia 2007).

leading academic publishers and typically included essays focused specifically on Islam, many of them earning a significant amount of citations, partly in still other publications on “Islam and the environment” and partly as sources of reference for authors writing different, albeit related topics.

From here, the path progressively led towards the emancipation of the academic discourse on “Islam and the environment” that now occupies a specific niche within the academic production in humanities, counting perhaps low hundreds of publications, as it has already been discussed (see 1.1.1). While the sheer amount of the literature complicates casual generalizations, it may still be said that the great majority of it follows more or less the same pattern: building on the central “primordialist assumption,” it promotes various iterations of the motives from the Islamic environmental catechism (2.2.1), either by their straight and simple reassertion, or, potentially, by partly reconstructing them through the conceptual innovation, more refined articulation, or addition of new framings, among which may be, e.g., the thematization through the lens of Islamic business ethics (Rice 2006; Abdelzaher and Abdelzaher 2015), economics (Shaikh 2013), and, in addition, focusing the attention on the practical application of the all-too-evident but rarely heeded propositions (Abdelzaher, Kotb, and Helfaya 2019). Other examples of such variations could still be mentioned.

In all these ways, the academic discourse must also be viewed as not only a complementary but functionally important component of the Islamic environmental discourse writ large, and this is not only by comprising its epistemological knowledge base (where anyone interested in the topic may reach and educate himself) but also, as one may notice, ideologically, by asserting the primordialist dogma of the veracity of the Islamic environmental “values” (which are now mostly treated as an evident “fact”; see 2.2.1.a) as well as their actual content in the form of the shared catechism (2.2). Apparently, the academic discourse provides both of these unfalsifiable but widely embraced presuppositions a significant sanction. This is also documented by the established habit of invoking the academic authorities and texts (even more frequently than statements of religious authorities in the more narrow sense) across large swaths of the discourse—which has been, after all, shown to casually intermingle with

academic debate and production that also in a substantial way contributed to its emergence.

Perhaps this “hybrid” configuration combining the normative and descriptive (with the balance, arguably, weighing towards the former) need not be seen as illegitimate or completely exceptional and may also be evidenced in other areas of academic debate and production operating with value and moral judgments. Still, it is also legitimate to pose questions about its validity and contribution. In the second part of this chapter, I will discuss how the current disposition of the discourse as an “engaged scholarship” (Tucker and Grim n.d.a) and its twin traits of primordialism and reiteration of catechism may ultimately limit its contribution and hamper not only the progress of the academic debate as such but also the progress towards the stated goals of the “Islamic environmentalism” itself, as far as it is aligned with this debate and nurtured by it.



## 6.2 The Academic Discourse on Islam and the Environment in a Critical Perspective: The Limitations and Possible Ways Forward

From a particular standpoint, the endeavor to address the question of “Islam and the environment” within academia may be viewed as relatively successful. Over the last 20 years, a plentiful amount of literature has been produced that gives more or less definitive answers to the question about the relationship between the two realms. Still, from another perspective, this success may be put in question. As already discussed a couple of times, the research in the field has brought a few new observations from its generative phase in the early 2000s. And while the nature and character of the Islamic “ecothology” and environmental “values” may have been elaborated in considerable detail, along with accounts of few local movements heeding these values, there seem to be few people outside of the field showing an interest in the “Eco-Islam” in either way. Eventually, the phenomena does not seem to have become a powerful societal force in the way that some of its proponents envisioned, and in such a situation, the talk about Islamic environmentalism (of which, ironically, many Muslims may not be very much cognizant) remains largely theoretical. Could it then be that the whole field has largely exhausted itself and, after already contributing by the “desperately needed,” “eco-friendly” (Foltz 2003, 249) interpretations of Islam (which, significantly, *do* play some positive role by inspiring ethical practice and may do so in future), has nothing to offer, and could be even retrospectively viewed as a blind alley built on false methodological assumptions, unsound expectations and ideological appropriation of its subject? In what follows, I will argue that this need not be the case and that there may be, in fact, still interesting avenues for researching “Islam and the environment.” Moreover, I will also claim that these avenues may ultimately benefit the activist “eco-Islamic” movement itself and enhance its role and success in achieving actual social change.

In what follows, I will first more thoroughly exemplify the current limitations of the field, particularly two main problems tied to applying the

primordialist perspective (6.2.1). Subsequently, I will discuss three notable attempts to treat the question of “Islam and the environment” differently, which emerged most in the recent period, and evaluate them in light of the previous critical observations (6.2.2). These will finally serve as a basis for several suggestions in what direction the research of “Islam and the environment” could proceed to overcome the current practice, broaden our knowledge about both Islam and the environment, and potentially also benefit the efforts to render the Islamic tradition conducive in tackling the environmental problems (6.2.3).

### **6.2.1 The Two „Primordialist Sins”**

Except for a small number of authors who attempted to approach the theme critically (I have already discussed them in the introduction and will return to them in more detail shortly; see 6.2.2), it can be said that the significant majority of publications about “Islam and the environment” follow a similar pattern. They are based, in one way or another, on presenting the essential “Islamic view” or attitude towards the environment based on scriptural (and occasionally other, like historical) sources. As such, they ultimately differ little from the “engaged” statements emerging in other contexts (like declarations, popularization essays of Muslim activists, or even sermons). Arguably, this scholarly production is often characterized by two significant shortcomings, the negative effect of which I will now illustrate with two examples.<sup>167</sup>

#### **6.2.1.a *Stasis and Replication***

Arguably, the first problem is the tendency to merely *reproduce* the discourse that has been already articulated without significant traits of criticism,

---

<sup>167</sup> This apparent generalization is based on my survey of a selection of these works, as they have been published in multiple journals and collections over the last decade or more. Admittedly, this selection (not least due to the sheer volume of the literature, which keeps being published on a regular basis) is necessarily incomplete. It is useful to note that this debate is not motivated by an intention to debase this academic production and writing in a blanket way. It is well possible that I have missed some important works or that my reading of some of the included ones has not been attentive enough. In any case, the sole purpose of this debate is exclusively one of inciting a critical discussion on the topic, not to blame particular authors or anyone for the „state of the field.”

reflection, or innovation. How does this operate? The “Islamic view” is typically juxtaposed to a particular term from the broadly defined environmental discourse, i.e., *environmental ethics, ecology, sustainability* (see also 1.1.1.a). Subsequently, the correspondence between both realms is documented, and the ensuing (usually hypothetical) contribution of Islamic concepts to the solution of environmental problems and promotion of the given agenda is observed. Within the procedure, this alleged correspondence is typically substantiated by a direct reference to the scriptural sources of Islam (often let to “speak by themselves,” i.e., interpreted by the given author at face value) or, alternatively (and often simultaneously), by a reference to other academic texts on “Islam and the environment,” which serve as a source of authoritative answers on the matter or a documentation of a wider consensus.

What, in turn, is typically absent in these texts, is the critical questioning of the general categories employed in the debate. This includes both the „Islamic“ ones (i.e. the terms from the catechism) and the „environmentalist“ ones (i.e., sustainability and others). The same holds also for thematization of differences between interpretations of different authors (which in fact do not differ much, but even when they differ, this difference is ignored and the discussion is not included). Controversial questions (like the contradictions between various approaches to environmental policy, overall, the contradictions so inherent and typical of the environmental discourse) are usually suppressed. In this way, the „Islamic view“ is thus approximated to a virtual (yet, as it has been shown above, illusory; cf. 5.2) consensus. Moreover, the question often is, as one may note, not what is specific about this Islamic view, but in what manner is it consistent with the supposedly universal values and postures. Remarkably, in this way, the academic production, as far as it follows this line, represents a slip in the level of a critical debate even from what was characteristic of the earlier phases of the Islamic environmental discourse, where controversies and neuralgic points (like the relationship between religion and secularity, tradition and modernity, development and the environment) very much figured (see Nasr [1968] 1990; Sardar 1984a; cf. 3.2; see also, e.g., Zaidi 1981; Ammar 1995). Finally, to make the matter worse, many of the issued articles are of a mediocre quality in terms of

their breadth or depth in the treatment of the topic and bring literally nothing new to the question.

To illustrate this problem, an example of a recent article issued by the *Social Sciences* journal, indexed in the Scopus database in 2022, and written by a group of authors from the Khalifa University in the United Arab Emirates under the title „Islam’s Perspective on Environmental Sustainability: A Conceptual Analysis“ (see Bsoul et al. 2022) may be mentioned. In an easily recognizable structure, the article draws on the UN *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* as an authoritative source on the question of sustainability. Its aim is to document agreement between „Islam“ and the goals of the Agenda, the motivation of which is based on the proposition that „as sustainability needs many drivers, appealing to religious principles and rules that support it represents an important motivational force for environmental participation“ (1). Accordingly, it is proposed that:

the Islamic teachings can be closely compared with the principles and goals of the UN’s agenda, especially in regard to the eradication of poverty and hunger (Agenda Goals 1 and 2) and responsible consumption and production (Goal 12). The exploitation of natural resources is included in a number of hadiths, discussed below, that stipulate preservation and stewardship of those resources. According to the Qur’an, preserving the environment is a religious duty in addition to a social obligation, and is not considered an optional matter (Bsoul et al. 2022, 2).

Subsequently, the article focuses on three areas, i.e., „Islam and Protection of Natural Resources,“ „The Islamic Perspective on the Development through Alleviation of Poverty and Creation of Community,“ and „Environmental Models Provided by Islam“ attempting to document the correspondence of the Islamic teachings with the Agenda goal in each of them.

The authors attempt to achieve that through quotations both from primary sources (hadith and the Qur’an) and a selection of literature on „Islam and the environment“ (that, notably, also covers Arabic sources). Neither of these sources is, however, evaluated critically or explicitly in terms of their methods or contribution. The literature is not even recognized as a specific field of inquiry or a successively developed pool of knowledge; instead, it is selectively used to underpin authors’ claims. The ultimate „proof“ consists of scriptural quotes playing the role of *prima facie* sustainability tenets. This is to the point that a

selection of Qur'anic verses about the Prophet Yusuf (12:46–49) is framed as „the story of the Prophet Yusuf/Joseph, who took part in preparing a *development strategy* for the state at the time [...] He dealt with the *economic crisis* and *climatic changes* through the means of a *practical, innovative solution* for *food security* at the time“ (Bsoul et al. 2022, 8; emphasis mine).

It is clear that the article does not problematize the meaning of the quoted verses or hadiths, their method of interpretation, or their elaboration into normative precepts, nor does it theorize the question of the relationship between scriptural sources and religious practice more generally. In fact, the authors do not even employ the framing through religious ethics as a field of discussion about the relationship between and intersection of different values. They merely juxtapose two staggeringly different kinds of discourse, i.e., the historical Qur'anic revelation, interpreted at face value regardless of its historical or intertextual context (including the rich exegetic tradition within Islam itself), and the contemporary institutional documents. Characteristic of this method of work is also that the extensive conclusions reached by the complicated process of interpretation throughout the preceding stages of development of the Islamic environmental discourse (as described above) are now treated as clear implications and *facts*: “The fact that a person is considered the caliph or ‘guardian’ implies that he can benefit from what God has created without overindulgence because it is not for him alone but for society and future generations” (Bsoul et al. 2022, 2). Finally and unsurprisingly, the text stays short of any attempt to discuss the applicability of such tenets or their relevance for social practice or step outside the realm of theoretical and hypothetical (and, in fact, doctrinal) reasoning.

As such, this example may thus illustrate (admittedly an extreme) case of what may be considered a *stasis* of the academic production on „Islam and the environment.“ This comprises the continuous recurrence and variation of the primordialist argument, which may enter new associations (like that with the UN Agenda 2030 above, or degrowth [cf. Al-Jayyousi 2015], Anthropocene [Keskin and Ozalp 2020], sustainable agriculture [Fuseini and Lever 2021] and others) and can be even expanded by new “original” interpretations or motives (like in the

case of the surat Yusuf above, which is not usually part of the catechism [see Bsoul et al. 2022, 8]), without, however, bringing any substantially new ideas.

Arguably, such a situation has ultimately a detrimental effect on the possibility of a meaningful debate on “Islam and the environment” and its progress. The continuous reduplication of a similar argument underpinned by a closed circuit of citations eventually creates a hardly approachable structure, which makes it difficult to distinguish between more or less important and original texts and identify any new ideas. While clearly being a product of the primordialist perspective and its limitations, this practice eventually undermines also the primordialist argument itself by obscuring its original meaning and possible contribution in the past (particularly by initiating the debate), literally drowning it in the growing pool of a generic discourse. The result is ultimately none other than the effective isolation of the field. This is hardly approachable for newcomer scholars or outsiders and may easily lead to the semblance of superficiality and artificiality of the whole debate on „Islam and the environment“ as an unacknowledged production of unfalsifiable, implicitly theological statements, which may display Islam as a timely and moral religion, but possess no apparent value in solving practical problems or pushing the boundaries of human knowledge further.

#### 6.2.1.b *Lack of Criticism and Apologetic Bias*

The second problem faced by the current field and the debate on „Islam and the environment“ may be illustrated by yet another text, which, in one particular aspect, clearly differs from the previous one: It does not lack a novelty and tries to bring in into the debate new perspectives. The text comprises a contribution to a collection titled *Global Governance and Muslim Organizations*, issued in 2018, and, except for the given contribution, not particularly concerned with the “religion and environment” agenda. The text, called „The OIC and the Paris 2015 Climate Change Agreement: Islam and the Environment,“ authored by Joseph Kaminski from the University of Sarajevo, thus attempts to inject the theme into the wider discussion of the collection. Notably, this is although neither Kaminski has a visible identity or personal history of being an “Islamic

environmentalist” (he is a scholar interested in topics of political science and cultural dialogue between Islam and modernity), which further shows the tendency of the discourse to become generalized.

In contrast to many other studies focused solely on conceptual analysis, Kaminski, perhaps thanks to his different affiliation, brings forth a fresh approach, at least in some respects. This does not mean that such conceptual analysis would be missing at all—Kaminski, too, begins his text with the primordialist assumption that there is a particular Islamic “weltanschauung,” which also definitively commands that man must co-exist and protect nature, not “conquer”<sup>168</sup> it (Kaminski 2018, 171). Still, unlike many other authors, Kaminski is willing to add to this analysis another ingredient (and one that also informs this dissertation)—the historical perspective.

This also leads Kaminski to an interesting step, in which he separates out the older scriptural layers of the Islamic tradition (the Qur’an, hadith, and the medieval intellectual tradition) as a specific theme of „early inspirations,“ distinct from the “modern approaches.” After recounting the familiar themes of *tawhīd*, *khilāfa*, and *amāna* (the fulfillment of which is obligatory and will be rewarded in *ākhirah*), incentives for tree-planting and a couple of other illustrative quotations from hadith (Kaminski 2018, 173–174), he proceeds to discuss figures like al-Kindi, Ibn al-Jazzar, Ibn Ridwan and Ibn Sina. Their works are used to demonstrate, particularly by highlighting the theory of environmental influence (cf. Glacken 1967, vii; see also 3.1.2.c), the alleged continuity of interest in environmental matters in medieval Islamic culture, following up with the Qur’anic thematizations. To the same end, the author also points out the systematic application of environmental ethics in theory and practice in the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman Egypt, which ended only with the ill-famed colonial and capitalist incursion in the 19th century (Ibid., 175–177).

From this brief account of older history, Kaminski subsequently proceeds toward the “modern Muslim approaches to environmental policy.” These consist of an account of environmentalism in Iran after the Iranian Revolution, a reference to the well-known 1983 *Islamic Principles* (Ba Kader et al., 1983; thoroughly discussed in 4.2.1.a), and mentions of still other examples of Islamic

---

<sup>168</sup> As epitomized by Mao Zedong’s dictum “Man must conquer nature” (Kaminski 2018, 171).

environmentalist engagement like the conferences in Jeddah and Teheran in the early 2000s the Muslim 7 Year Action Plan on Climate Change and the 2015 Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change (see 4.2; 5.1.1)—all of them presented as proofs of the fact, that the environmental policy from the Muslim perspective indeed exists (Kaminski 2018, 177–180). Finally, the analysis makes a last important step: from the focus on a mere discursive practice, it moves to the actual state of the environment in Muslim countries and the policy-making therein. In the last part, called „OIC Member State Participation in COP 21,“ Kaminsky reviews the actions of Muslim states in the wake of the 2015 Paris Agreement. This is done through the evaluation of the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC)<sup>169</sup> of selected states, namely Iran, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, and Turkey, as well as assessing some other aspects of their environmental policies (ibid., 184–192). Upon that, Kaminski concludes by stating to be “cautiously optimistic“ given that “initial efforts offered by OIC member states ought to be lauded and serve as a testament to the ability of Muslim states to play a major role in contributing to good global governance” (ibid., 191–192).

Already from this cursory review, it is clear that Kaminski’s approach significantly surpasses a typical academic treatment focused on the conceptual and scriptural analysis of Islamic environmental “values.” Even if still present, this analysis has been shown to be significantly supplemented by a broader discussion. In this discussion, the interaction between „Islam and the environment“ is treated as a historically evolving process and, moreover, is not limited to the discursive realm but also thematizes the crucial area of social practices and policy changes. As such, Kaminski seems to divert soundly from the prevailing trend in the academic discourse toward a more grounded and context-sensitive approach. Nevertheless, this promising direction is ultimately marred by what may be, with a slight hyperbole, identified with the second „primordialist sin.“ This comprises the lack of critical questioning and realism in evaluating the studied subject.

---

<sup>169</sup> INDC comprise a central principle of the 2015 Paris Agreement within the framework of which each party is expected to state its own targets of contribution to the climate change mitigation which are then periodically assessed and reviewed.



Conceivably, this trait is already apparent in that Kaminski uses his sources and the variety of perspectives that he applies to construe rather an unambiguous narrative. In this narrative, „Islam’s historical moral resources” (i.e., the Qur’an, hadith, and the medieval tradition), the fact „that Muslim-majority states have been actively engaged with the more general global discourse on environmentalism for decades,” and the purported active contribution of Muslim countries to global climate change mitigation efforts are connected to propose strong claims about the positive role of Islam in tackling global environmental problems. This corresponds to Kaminski’s conviction that Islam, „regardless of one’s interpretation,” and notwithstanding „sectarian differences,” embraces “an inalienable duty to protect the environment that can be found within Islam’s primary sources going back to the first Caliph” (Kaminski 2018, 172).

Arguably, just by itself, any similar claim about an unequivocally positive role of any human group or culture in addressing a particular problem, more so if it spans centuries and derives from primordial motives—should invite doubts and critical questioning. Moreover, Kaminski’s narrative is stretched to considerable lengths and connects phenomena that would probably not be normally be seen as closely related (i.e., scriptural quotes about *mīzān* and *khilāfa*, writings of medieval authors on medicine, activism that criticizes the Iranian government for the lack of environmental action, and the conferences and policies organized by the very same government)—this all without explaining their actual connections (in fact, they are tied together mainly by the label of the Islamic identity). Still, an even bigger problem seems to be that the included historical cases are not seriously debated or considered but are used more or less liberally to fit the given narrative. In discussing the Ottoman Empire, Kaminski presents positive examples of what is viewed as a concern for ecological harmony and environmental ethics, reaching for support even to the environmental-historical literature (2018, 176; cf. Mikhail 2011). At the same time, he, however, ignores the functioning of the empire as a redistributive militarized economic system that, in particular stages of history, strained environmental resources and sunk into serious crises, described in the literature equally as well (see, e.g., White 2011; see also Mikhail 2011).<sup>170</sup> This questionable approach extends to the modern era. It

---

<sup>170</sup> It may be useful to note that the selective approach is also one of the signs of the primordialist approach towards national histories.

includes the example of Iran, on which the author partly bases his image of modern Muslim environmental engagement. Kaminski quotes articles 45 and 50 of the 1979 Constitution and recounts activities of some NGOs in the country, which, according to him, use the Qur'an and "other Islamic historical moral resources" to pressure the government to address the environmental issues (ibid. 177–178). In locating the state's environmental agenda just after the Islamic revolution, Kaminski though ignores that Iran addressed it first and in a pioneering way already before, during the height of the secularizing Shah's regime, without relation to Islamic discourse (see, e.g., Firouz 2013). Moreover, the post-revolutionary period can be, overall, hardly be viewed as a "golden age" of environmentalism; the officially „Islamic“ regime mismanaged the environment to disastrous ends—a fact that is stated even in Kaminski's main source, Foltz (cf. Foltz 2005c), but is sidelined in his account.

Still, the ironic disputability of Kaminski's final and most actual argument must be viewed as the most egregious. This concerns the alleged contribution of the selected group of Muslim nations to the global climate agenda, presented as a paragon of their constructive participation in international governance. Kaminski, remarkably, bases his assessment on the ratification of the treaty, which most world states ratified, and mere pledges and assurances without considering the environmental policies of the given states in a more substantive manner. In fact, all of the countries mentioned by the author now rank as „insufficient“ and mostly „critically insufficient“ regarding their climate action.<sup>171</sup> The list includes major fossil fuels exporters and some of the worst polluters globally, with Iran, the world's eighth largest emitter of CO<sub>2</sub>, comprising one of the few states that have actually even *not* ratified the Paris Agreement— this all without a hint of criticism.

In this way, Kaminski, even though commendably broadens the debate to include new areas of history and politics, aptly illustrates the second characteristic „sin“ of many academic works on Islam and the environment. This comprises the tendency to paint the attitude of the Islamic tradition to environmental matters—in the past, present, and future—as unequivocally positive and constructive by sidelining or ignoring all the potentially problematic

---

<sup>171</sup> See Climate Action Tracker (<https://climateactiontracker.org>).

aspects. Arguably, this tendency may be directly related to the already discussed apologetic value of the environmental discourse in Islam (5.2.3) and may be registered among both Muslim and non-Muslim authors.<sup>172</sup> Kaminski's text also immediately reveals one of the inherent dangers of such a practice. Supporting the veracity of the tradition by "worldly" arguments (and connecting particular policies or processes to the inherent "Islamic quality") may ultimately lead to unintended or even opposite consequences. It would be rather unfortunate if the "pro-environmental" character of Islam would depend on whether Saudi Arabia fulfills its climatic commitments. In fact, it could be a legitimate expectation that the "pro-environmental" character of Islam should lead its proponents to raise a critique of the environmental policies of many Muslim states, but this is not very often, and neither does it figure in Kaminski's account. Still, the second and more substantive problem of this apologetic tendency is apparent, too: the apologetic bias prevents the application of criticism and critical approaches and thereby limits the progress of the inquiry toward what is not yet known. To the degree that the potential of Islam to contribute to the resolution of ecological problems also depends on the knowledge of the problem, the prevalence of this posture within the field may ultimately not benefit it.

## 6.2.2 Novel and Critical Approaches

Despite the volume of texts that may be viewed as representing a stasis in the field and reproducing the already pronounced themes along recurrent methods, it would be wrong to assume that the academic debate on Islam and the environment would not move forward along the course of its existence. While in its early stage, critical questioning in terms of methodological assumptions appeared rarely,<sup>173</sup> since the 2010s, it has become more widespread. Some of it

---

<sup>172</sup> The motivation of this tendency is a matter of debate. Naturally, it may spring from one's own personal conviction and religious commitments, but also, e.g., from the effort to avoid offending such commitments or diverting from the broader consensus within the field which views religion as instrumentally valuable for the promotion of „environmental aims.“

<sup>173</sup> Arguably, the early debate (3.2) had some critical aspects, as it has already been noted. Among others, at least partly critical and reflexive contributions may be counted, e.g., those of Foltz (2003a; 2003b; 2005a). A partial criticism of the trend set by the Harvard conference (relevant for the whole field of religion and ecology) also appears in the works of R. Gottlieb and activities of the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture (ISSRNC) (Finnegan 2011, 67).

has already been discussed, like the collection of Bauman, Bohannon, and O'Brian (2011) critically intervening in the debate on religion and ecology (1.1.1.c), the reflections on the religious discourse on the environment in Indonesia (5.1.4.c), and other pieces of literature (Bagir and Martiam 2016; Vincenti 2017; Hancock 2018). In this section, I will, in more detail, analyze the works of three authors, who may be viewed as signifying the possibilities of further development and progress in the field either by its conscious critical reflection or by applying new methods.

First, I will discuss Anna Gade's book *Muslim Environmentalisms*, published in 2019, which attempts to reframe the "Islam and the environment" debate through a post-colonial perspective. Second, I will focus on a recent book by Samira Idllalène, who, through a comparative perspective, discusses the prospects of integrating Islamic legal institutions and concepts into the environmental-legal framework applicable to the level of state and international law. Third, I will go through the work of Sara Tlili, who, since the 2010s, has applied novel and critical interpretative and exegetical methods and attempted to redefine some basic concepts, mainly in the area of animal ethics. I will discuss each of these contributions, which differ in applied perspectives but share a common trait of reflecting on the current debate and seeking new directions, critically, too, and relate them to my previous analysis of the field. This will be subsequently utilized in the discussion of the possible new methods of research.

### 6.2.2.a *Anna Gade and the Revolution in the Environmental Humanities*

I have already quoted the name of Anna Gade in this book a couple of times. Since the 1990s, the US-based scholar has been conducting field research in Southeast Asia, progressively drifting towards the focus on Indonesia and environmental interpretations of Islam therein, and as such, her work was used as a highly relevant source in the previous chapter (see 5.1.4). In 2019, Gade addressed the theme of "Islam and the environment" more extensively in a book, *Muslim Environmentalisms*, hailed by one of the doyens of the field, R. Foltz, as „the first ever book-length critical scholarly treatment of discussions on the

relationship of Islamic values to environmental ones“ (Foltz 2020, 296). Arguably, Gade’s book should be of interest to anyone engaged with the topic, even if one would finally disagree with Foltz’s assessment. This is not only because it actually figures among the very few book-length scholarly treatises on “Islam and the environment” published *at all* but also because the perspectives and methods applied by Gade on the study of the question are indeed novel and thought-provoking and, as such, can be hardly ignored or omitted (this all putting aside that the book has also won acclaim in at least the part of the academic and activist community and is therefore posed to shape further debates).

The significance and reverberation of Gade’s book clearly return in the first place to the fact that it provides not only an ethnographic or sociological account of the particular expressions and enactments of Islamic environmentalism or environmental discourse (which comprise the bulk of the critical empirically-oriented literature on the topic; cf. 1.1.1.b) but comprises a conscious effort to address the intersection between Islam and the environment in broad and general terms. While it is her field research in Indonesia upon which Gade programmatically bases her key propositions (cf. Gade 2019, 13), her book, by and large, is not only about Indonesian Islam. In a noticeable reverberation of the tradition of classical cultural anthropology (to which she consciously appeals; see *ibid.* 5–13), the author aspires to derive from her localized fieldwork generalizable statements. To this end, the study mobilizes a number of still other sources and methods. These include not only the familiar sources of the Qur’an and hadith, possessing universal validity among diverse Muslim communities, but also a set of writings and comments on “Islam and the environment”—in other words, the excerpts of the Islamic environmental discourse—and, lastly, the sophisticated and complex methodological and theoretical means that are in greater part critical, focused on deconstruction and problematization of normally used categories. Let me first briefly go through the content of the book and its main argument.

Drawing on decolonization ethos and debate spanning the disciplinary perspectives of environmental and religious studies, Gade proposes as her main argument to regard the Islamic conceptualizations of the environment and environmental matters (i.e., the *Muslim environmentalisms* programmatically understood in a pluralist way) as of universal relevance, namely to “shift the

foundation of humanistic fields [i.e. within environmental humanities]” through their “Islamicization” and to “re-theorize key questions at the frontier of the field, like the most pressing ethical and humanistic questions of environmental justice and anticipation of dire consequence that guide the cutting-edge of inquiry today” (1–2). “Muslim environmentalisms” and Islam more broadly, conceived of as “autonomous systems of knowledge” (1) are thus assumed as an antidote and corrective to the “Eurocentric and colonial humanistic paradigms” (5) and its expressions in the “mainstream” environmental humanities which, according to Gade, encounter their limits in the dealing with an apocalyptic environmental change (2–3).

To illustrate this potential of Islam to reframe the thinking about the environment, Gade includes in her book seven chapters. While the first frame the book in terms of its general argument, the following five successively treat particular topics of interest used to underpin the general thesis. The second chapter debates what is called by Gade “explicitly Islamic” environmentalism connected to the activity of international ENGOs, referred to also as “Islam and the environment” (see also below), and criticized as limited and projected onto Muslim communities from outside. In Chapter 3, focused on “a Qur’anic environment,” Gade offers mainly her own reading (for the vindication of its method see particularly 78–81) of the Qur’an as a harbinger of environmental values and meanings and partly contrasts it to the implicit (and often explicit) criticism of the current treatments of the text within the “mainstream” Islamic environmental discourse for its alleged “arbitrary” quotations that lack proper hermeneutics. In Chapter 4, Gade focuses on conceptual resources of the Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and practice of legal reasoning. In Chapter 5, drawing on the concept of “Islamic humanities” (cf. 158–159), she proposes a broader relevance of the Islamic philosophy, arts and literary tradition for current environmental humanities by referring to medieval sources and discusses theme in relation to previous themes. In Chapter 6, Gade more intensively draws on her ethnographic accounts from the Indonesia to recount the actually lived and experienced Muslim environmentalisms and communities built around them, which she also (again) contrasts to the Anglo- and Euro-centrist conceptions of the environment, as well as the treatments of sufism and spirituality like those promoted by, among others,

S. H. Nasr. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes with reiterating the main point of the whole book, namely that what is construed by the author as “Muslim environmentalisms” may fundamentally enrich environmental humanities in both critical and constructive terms, and this is by providing conceptual and interpretative means or “the sort of model environmental humanities may strive for in order to understand the connections of environmentalist commitments to theory and practice in areas like aesthetics, ontology, and everyday ethics“ (243).

As such, Gade, in rather an ambitious move, presents the Islamic environmental discourse (but also the practice, stressed by her focus on actual communities and their everyday experience—also denoted by the concept of Muslim *environmentalisms*) as an epistemological and moral resource of universal validity (and one which humanity can poorly afford to ignore in facing the vast environmental challenges). At face value, this proposition looks familiar—as it has been documented in many writings by Muslim authors throughout this book, right from the first identified occurrences of their comments on the environment and environmental crisis, namely in the thesis that Islam provides “norm and guidance” in the area of environmental matters (see 3.3.2.b). At the same time, it is important to stress that in making her proposition, Gade attempts to distinguish her vision from the preceding debate. This is done by proposing a new reading and definition of “Muslim environmentalisms,” grounded in the author’s own methods and academic perspective, and by willfully confronting the other predominant narratives about “Islamic environmentalism” as well as by the criticism of the preceding “mainstream” discourse in its general traits. This polemical tone also permeates Gade’s account as well as the very way of addressing the topic, being, among other means, transmitted by the phrase “Islam *and* the environment” (cf. 14), which the author uses, sometimes with an unconcealed irony, to signify what she deems an inadequate and artificial construct, obfuscating the real meaning of “Muslims environmentalisms.” The scope and substance of Gade’s criticism of the field—vital for apprehending her argument—is broad and, therefore, difficult to recount succinctly. However, it targets much of the writings on the matter in academia (both from the primordialist and empirical perspectives) as well broad swaths of the discourse, including the institutional documents emerging from NGO-related activities or the

influential “activist” statements by Nasr, Khalid, Abdul-Matin, and others. The core aspect of the critique raised by Gade holds that these texts, in the majority of cases, “relabel” and reapply “normative and secular notions like the European sublime and so on,” leading to the “propagation of non-Islamic idioms that Muslim messages are either rooted in or react to” (14) and, overall, “recast” Islam into “secular environmental frameworks” (245). It is mainly in contrast to them that Gade proposes her own reading of “Muslim environmentalisms,” aspiring “to render a balanced treatment of Qur’an, law, philosophy, and religious thought, expressions in the sciences, art, and literature, as well as community and practice [...] guided by field-based examples from research carried out firsthand by the author in several countries” (13).

Because it would be a largely worthless effort to attempt to transmit Gade’s conceptually dense, almost constantly polemic, and structurally convoluted manner of addressing the topic by reviewing all of its specific points, the best way to further present the book’s argument may be to focus on a couple of concrete issues and examples. Through them, I will also get to the question of the validity and value of this argument.

In the first place, it is arguably necessary to acknowledge the legitimacy of one of the main Gade’s aims, comprising of the radical theoretical re-evaluation of the “Islam and the environment” debate and field. Unlike many other authors (even if perhaps not in a completely unique manner suggested by Foltz above [2020, 296]), Gade displays awareness of and puts to scrutiny the socially constructed and historical nature of many of the “eco-Islamic” concepts and discourses as well as their entanglement with the “secular” and non-Islamic “codes,” in many cases instrumentalized to serve particular ends (such as those of governments or conservationists networks aligned with given ideological outlooks). Gade offers radical but potentially valid and poignant criticism here. She observes that Islamic “values” promoted through the infrastructures of “Islam and the environment,” often by NGOs, are „institutionalized, operationalized, and even commoditized in education and may be further monetized in related programs such as for ecotourism“ (2019, 65). They are, in her view, invented by outsiders, imposed on Muslim communities from above, and operationalized through political power and patronage (41, 64, 76). As already indicated, Gade



criticizes this practice as (neo)colonial intervention and manipulation of Muslim messages, often conforming to tenets of developmentalism and being imbued with neoliberal ideology (see, e.g., 52–56) and incorporated into the structures of „late market capitalism“ (74). As she points out, during this process, the potentially disruptive and subversive aspects of the Islamic faith and practice (such as those related to the concept of justice) are sidelined, and further questioning and inquiry that could make these environmentalisms more potent do not take place (47). Gade also observes the rather poor effectivity of such initiatives (42, 52) and their usual confluence with the generic versions of environmental agenda (48–52), which raises a question about their potential superfluosity (arguably, similar issues have also been encountered in this thesis; see particularly chapter 4). What is, however, the ultimate message derived from such criticism?

Here, it is important to consider that it closely relates to and even directly translates into the author’s second and still more momentous argument. Arguably, it is essentially given the inadequacy of the “mainstream” circulated “Islamic environmentalism” that Gade may present her own notion of “Muslim environmentalisms,” to which she attributes the potential to contribute to the perception, understanding, intellectual processing, and resolution of environmental matters—and that it has gone unnoticed and unheeded. In this sense, Foltz’s assessment that Gade’s book is wholly critical must also be revised—it is simultaneously constructive (as the author herself acknowledges [see Gade 2019, 243]). Hence, what about these “Muslim environmentalisms” and Gade’s vision of them? How does it contribute to the debate within the field? Given the expansive web of meanings linked to the concept, giving a definitive assessment may not be particularly easy. Nevertheless, there are some clear attributes of it. I will first focus on those that may indeed prove conducive for, to the very least, evaluation and theorization of the intersection between Islam and ecology (and, by extension, also religion and ecology as such).

In most general terms, what Gade proposes may be arguably best grasped as the expansion of the ambit of religious meanings, as well as ritual and other practices, institutions, cultural artifacts, and even modes of existence that may be interpreted “environmentally.” Commenting specifically on the Qur’an, this idea is poignantly condensed in the suggestion that

there are practically countless verses of the Qur'an that could be "about the environment," including any and all of the many that mention conditions in the natural world or abstract ideas like "knowledge" or "oppression." There are hundreds that are explicitly about justice, responsibility, and limits, for example, which are also environmental themes from a humanistic perspective. In the era called the Anthropocene, defined here as the present period in which human activity dominates planetary conditions, all content about humans' history affecting this world and the next, whether the destruction of past communities through "natural" disasters or that which is to come, could also be said to be about the environment. Finally, from the established religious perspective that "the environment" creates the conditions of Islam, it would not be incorrect to approach all the Qur'an's teaching as being environmental in nature (Gade 2019, 86)

This also, as one may notice, well characterizes Gade's broader approach to „Muslim environmentalisms,“ which is partly evident already from the cursory overview of the structure of the whole book as touched upon above. In Gade's vision, it is ultimately the whole expansive edifice of Islamic „knowledge“ and its „systems“ (cf. 2019, 1) that addresses (or may address) being in and relating to the environment in a specific way, unobvious at face value, but prolific under closer scrutiny. Hence, it is apparent why the American scholar includes in her account, except for the ordinarily treated areas of the Qur'an, hadith, and jurisprudence, also the less common areas of science and aesthetics (clustered under the term of „Islamic humanities“ [cf. 158–159]) with the latter interpreted in a similarly expansive (and even liberal) manner as „environmentally relevant.“

This perspective undeniably brings forth some valuable observations. These may comprise of noticing the potential breath of the intersection between Islam as a religious message, morality and culture and the environment as an ethical idea (a view stressed by Gade in conclusion [2019, 246–248]) pointing toward the condition of human existence—an intersection that does not even need to be expressed through specific tropes but follows from the elementary ontological and theological presuppositions (like situatedness of mankind within the framework of all creation, the general concept of justice and so on; cf. 252–253). Aligned with that are still narrower insights, like the discussions of the richness of the Qur'anic representations of nature in particular cases (e.g., regarding animals; cf. 176–181), their multivalent and often inspirational meanings, or the capability of the religious imaginaries to capture the catastrophic and

cataclysmic aspects of the environmental change through apprehending the “next” world along this one (193–197; 199)—all thanks to the ability to symbolize and “rendering the unseen, unpredictable, and indeterminate [...] into intelligible and replicable” (193).<sup>174</sup> Even besides these observations, Gade’s account may also be seen as highly instructive to the point that it can be treated as an incentive to expand the study of „Islam and the environment“ beyond its usual limits and include new layers of both symbolic and historical material (something I will also discuss shortly; see 6.2.2.d).

Nonetheless, although contributive in its radical theoretical questioning and many of its propositions, Gade’s bold intervention, which both targets the field of the Islamic environmental discourse and draws on it to propose a broader argument about environmentalism writ large, needs to be viewed critically, too. Arguably, such a critical reading is most acutely relevant in one particular area. This is Gade’s attempt to situate herself radically *outside* the current discourse on “Islam and the environment”—one which she mostly and often harshly criticizes (among other terms) as “neocolonialist” and “interventionist manipulation of Islamic doctrine and practice” (see, e.g., 56, 76). This notion seems problematic in that Gade’s critique results in a strange dichotomy between two contradictory positions, which are, however, only vaguely defined and documented in the text and, ultimately, burden the whole account in terms of argumentative clarity but also factual validity.

Gade’s objections to what is construed as the “mainstream” discourse (which includes both the doctrinal and the empirically oriented writings) are multiple. She accuses the authors of superficially drawing on “scriptural keywords” and a “filtered selection of the Qur’an’s ‘environmental values’” (2019, 13) resulting in relabeling and reapplication of “normative and secular notions like the European sublime” on Islam (14), which is thus approached in an essentializing way and with Orientalist bias, diverting from more profound structure of environmental meanings in the Qur’an and the actual lived experience of Muslim communities (see 1–14). While admittedly at least partly valid in many

---

<sup>174</sup> Still, arguably, neither of that is unique to Islam as an ancient religious tradition and culture—a fact that may easily get lost in Gade’s treatment that often slips towards exceptionalist language. On the other hand, Gade is definitely right in pointing out that Islam faces in this regard a more disdainful and ignorant reception due to the prevailing narratives focusing on its „violent“ expressions (2019, 233–239).

aspects, this critique, however, too often loses its specificity and directedness and turns into a blanket rejection of most of what had been written or said before. According to Gade, the “standard” approaches busy with compiling the “environmental verses” do not even engage properly with the Qur’anic text, ignore “the text’s own rhetorical presentation,” do not consult “textual tradition” and do not consider “context,” along with being “rarely guided and supplemented by hadith [...] which comprise[s] the basis of much of Islamic law and practical ethics” (79–80).

Unfortunately, there is little clarity about what precisely covers these “standard” approaches as, too often, no references are provided. But it is hard to see how most of the authors writing about “Islam and the environment” (the great majority of them being Muslims guided by their own study and often motivated by piety and personal conviction) could be reasonably accused of such a degree of neglectful approach notwithstanding the possible disagreement between Gade’s and their own interpretations. As documented in many instances above, the fact that hadith is ignored then simply does not seem to be true.<sup>175</sup>

This pattern is recurrent in Gade’s book. In what can hardly not be seen as debasing and disparaging (and, as has been noted, even “mocking”; cf. Foltz 2020, 297) manner, the author regularly refers to “Anglophone” and “standard” treatments of “Islam *and* the environment” or, e.g., “English-speaking compilers” (Gade 2019, 92) “search results on Islam and the environment” (96) and like, to pit her own interpretations against the virtual opposite, without, however, providing in most cases a direct reference to it or engaging in serious analysis and discussion of the purportedly contravening ideas.<sup>176</sup> Notably, a similar treatment through such vague labels is, ultimately, also applied to the “European tradition,” “academic environmentalism,” and “environmental humanities,” present in the text in most cases without direct references and underpinned at most by name-listing of selected authorities (like Latour, Haraway, Morton, or Klein). Moreover, erecting this artificial barrier and dichotomy between her own ideas and the rest of

---

<sup>175</sup> And even if Gade would have in mind the NGOs-facilitated discourse, the fact is that this is often articulated by engaged Muslim scholars—in other words, there can hardly be drawn a definite boundary within what has been above analyzed as a dispersed and hybrid assemblage.

<sup>176</sup> Arguably, the fact that Gade, in some places, admits that Muslim environmentalisms pronounced as “Islam and the environment” are no less authentic or valid than the others (cf. 2019, 39–40, 81, 199, 200) does not eventually undo the contemptuous tone of most of her comments.

the field by Gade may be ultimately viewed as paradoxical and perhaps even dishonest, as she, at times, underpins her own conclusions by the texts of authors who can be reasonably identified with the “Anglophone” discourse and participated in the NGOs-related activities (a case in point is M. Izzi Dien, quoted extensively by the author [see Gade 2019, 96–99]).

Most significantly, there are also instances where Gade’s critique directed at concrete authors may be viewed as unfair and on the verge of misinterpretation. Thus, for example, commenting on Abdul-Matin’s book discussed above (Abdul-Matin 2010; 5.1.1.d), which Gade classes as pertaining to “Islam *and* the environment” category and elsewhere characterizes it as an example of “lifestyle-focused American discourse” (which may be in other respects a right assessment), the author claims that in commenting on the issue of energy resources, Abdul-Matin “stops just short of bringing this issue together with the Islamic call to justice, here climate justice” (Gade 2019, 75). Staggeringly, such a critique is hard to reconcile with the fact that the concerned chapter of Abdul-Matin’s book quoted by Gade *begins* by stating that “[fossil] energy from hell [...] disturbs the balance (*mizan*) of the universe and is therefore a great injustice (*zulm*) [...] In Islam, Allah calls all people to justice (*adl*)” (Abdul-Matin 2010, 77). Moreover, Abdul-Matin, as already discussed, thematizes justice as one of the most frequent concepts representing one of the six principles of his “Green Deen” (Abdul-Matin 2010, xix). As evident, it also does not avoid the other morally charged terms like *zulm* (“oppression”)—which Gade elsewhere accuses the “Anglophone humanities” of neglecting (Gade 2019, 123–124).

Similarly, in commenting on the work of Fazlun Khalid (whose work has been debated as significant and influential above; see 5.1.1.a), Gade targets the British Muslim activist as a “representative of a scholarly key word approach” (Gade 2019, 84) based, however, on an isolated example of his contribution to the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* (see also above; 6.1.2.c), obviously intended for general readership and comprising only a brief entry. Arguably, this hardly does justice to the legacy of this British activist who, in many of his writings, addresses issues that are in fact, not so far from Gade’s concerns, adopting

sometimes even rather radical, anti-capitalist, and anti-modernist stances (cf. Khalid 1992; Vadillo and Khalid 1992).<sup>177</sup>

Finally, Gade does not spare from criticism also S. H. Nasr. While admitting his pioneering position within the field, she interprets his *Man and Nature* chiefly in the context of the Emersonian and Thoreau's notions of sublime nature, as well as other intellectual influences of his period at Harvard (but not, remarkably, his commitment to Traditionalist school) and ultimately characterizes him, too, as a representative (and effectively a founder) of the "Islam *and* the environment" approach (Gade 2019, 207–213). The shortcomings of his approach are viewed in multiple aspects of not embracing postcolonial critique, critique of capitalism and environmental racism (211–213),<sup>178</sup> overlooking themes of community practice and apocalypticism (207), and, overall, representing an "Emersonian transcendentalism or elite, esoteric philosophy universalized to match scale with an everyman's individualized subjectivity" (214).

Arguably, also here, the validity and integrity of Gade's critique need to be put into question, especially in its concrete form. Putting aside whether Gade really comes to terms with Nasr's argument<sup>179</sup> and how adequate is her interpretation of his work mainly through the lens of American Transcendentalism and romantic notions of nature (cf. Gade 2019, 210–211),<sup>180</sup> this critique is also remarkable for another specific reason. This is the fact that Nasr's ideas seem in some respects closely align with Gade's own ones. In this regard, it is useful to recall that Nasr—against modern scientism—elevates the medieval Islamic sciences as an example of good practice whereby the moral and philosophical

---

177 To further complicate the picture, the „revisionist“ postures of Khalid have been published in a volume sponsored by WWF, elsewhere identified by Gade with „programming“ to promote a „universalist“ agenda under Islamic guise (2019, 38) as a part of the broader NGO infrastructure and its „neocolonialist manipulation.“

178 The latter term was, however, coined only in the 1980s, similarly to the term environmental justice, which Gade rather anachronistically situates already in the 1960s.

179 On many occasions, Gade unduly simplifies Nasr's ideas, like in attributing to him the view that „bad science is scientism“ and even confusing scientism with „scientific attitude“ (Gade 2019, 212), even though this clearly misses the substance of Nasr's critique which is philosophical and epistemological (not scientific per se) and demands treating science as a limited source of truth instead of its identification with the truth itself (cf. 3.2.1).

180 Regardless of Nasr's inevitable and apparent knowledge of these streams, his own work contains little evidence of such an influence; in his *Man and Nature*, Nasr explicitly criticizes romantic valuations of nature as „sentimental“ and incapable of changing the course of the modern civilization (Nasr 1990, 72–73). In contrast to the American tradition of „wilderness,“ the Traditionalist school of Guenon and Schuon seems to be of key influence on Nasr—this is, however, not thematized by Gade.

groundings of human culture were not disrupted by empirically oriented scientific practice, but both existed in harmony with each other (Nasr 1990, 98–99). It is hard not to see this as a direct analogy of Gade’s expansive programmatic treatment of Islamic sciences as one of her key exemplars of “Muslim environmentalisms”’ potential contribution to contemporary Environmental humanities (2019, 181–186),<sup>181</sup> specifically as a “means to grasp unseen and uncontrollable aspects of phenomenal reality integrally connected to moral sciences while maintaining an empiricist approach” (186). Incidentally, in addressing alchemy as a specific example of these sciences, Nasr makes a similar argument, describing it as a “symbolic science of natural forms based on the correspondence between different planes of reality and making use of mineral and metal symbolism to expound a spiritual science of the soul” (Nasr 1990, 104–105). From yet a different perspective, Nasr also seems to philosophically embody Gade’s favored notion of environmentalism being mobilized for “religious goals” rather than “environmentalist” ones (Gade 2019, 37, 199, 253) by his very notion of *spiritual crisis* that is no less serious than the environmental one and comprises a calamity by its own terms (see, e.g., Nasr 21–22). Egregiously, instead of productively engaging with these ideas, Gade criticizes Nasr for allegedly not paying the Islamic sciences enough detailed scrutiny (Gade 2019, 213)<sup>182</sup> and renders him effectively a representative of the NGO-driven, Anglophone, and Orientalist approach subjecting Islamic view of the environment to unacknowledged and alien ideological commitments, purportedly standing in contrast to her ethnographic observations (Gade 214).

This not only shows to what degree Gade sacrifices the impartial reading of the field to the highly polemical intention of her book but also raises another important critical question, and that is to what degree can her ideas be seen as really substantially different from the preceding discourse. After all, it is in its ultimate structure also Gade’s argument that Islam, through the Qur’anic moral guidance, the exemplary practice of the Prophet, juridical injunctions, historical institutions, and scientific and aesthetic exemplars, provides resolution to humanity’s environmental dilemmas, appending and surpassing the allegedly deficient secular (i.e., non-Islamic) responses, this time epitomized by the

---

<sup>181</sup> See also the whole of Chapter 4 in the book.

<sup>182</sup> Which he does, see above.

environmental humanities' "broken ethical language" (241), together with their "world-redemptive myths" of Gaia and Anthropocene that now "work overtime" (3), the "postmodern jumble" resulting from Latour's work (241–242) and so on. This argument has been shown to be not unique throughout the historical development of the discourse. Ultimately, it is hard to avoid the feeling that it is precisely for the sake of furnishing this much-repeated (and in fact generic) imaginary with a semblance of novelty that Gade frames her contribution as a revolutionary redefinition of the whole field—in a way that is not entirely persuasive. Regardless of the salience of many examples drawn from her fieldwork that may indeed demonstrate that the lived experience of the internalized "Muslim environmentalisms" differs substantially from the imaginaries developed in the written theoretical treatises (or, for that matter, from lived experiences in other cultural settings), it is not entirely clear, how these individual instances ultimately correspond with other components of Gade's vision like her own reading of the Islamic history and essentially an exegetic effort to retrieve "a millenium of Muslim's Qur'anic ecology" from the written tradition (76)—and, even less so, how these components easily coalesce into the singular "model" to be emulated by environmental humanities or environmentalist thinking writ large (cf. 243).

As will be yet discussed, for these reasons, Gade's account can be ultimately viewed as failing the test of the critical historical approach for which I will argue shortly. The Islamic environmental history is presented by Gade (and in this respect, her study is very much coherent with the majority of the "Islam and the environment" field) as unequivocally constructive and positive encounter, free from deficiencies, misunderstandings, and omissions ascribed to every other intellectual and cultural tradition.<sup>183</sup> As it has been shown, this questionable

<sup>183</sup> Gade, for example, goes as far as to claim that „Muslim-majority societies developed the same environmental sciences that are known today through their European adoption during the period of the region's civilizational Renaissance at the far geographical periphery of the Muslim-majority world“ (2019, 186). Notwithstanding the rebuttal of Orientalism as a debasement of genuine contributions of Muslim sciences and culture (which is certainly right), such claims, posited literally with few qualifications, are difficult to view as other than anachronistic and historically problematic. And even if not, whether these sciences developed within Muslim tradition (as contributive as they once were) provide „rigorous methods“ for „analysis, evaluation, and connection“ of the „symbolic and real“ (197) that would be applicable to present problems is, arguably, itself a question that requires rigorous analysis and actual documentation and demonstration. This is, however, not present in Gade's book, and also, in this regard, it can be claimed that her work repeats a lacuna characteristic of many writings on the environment from the "Islamic" perspective, namely that „the environment“ in



approach and treatment also extend to the contemporary Islamic environmental discourse, which, instead of being assessed critically and with a full appreciation of its multiple shades and contours as well as intricate and sometimes surprising connections,<sup>184</sup> is subjected to predetermined and polarizing categorizations, leading to dubious and contestable conclusions. In all these regards, Gade's contribution to the debate, as much as it has been lauded from some directions, seems to be ambiguous. While proposing the certainly needed "critical turn" in this debate, by remaining implicitly apologetic in some dimensions and becoming inconsistently critical in others, Gade ultimately stays within the current ambit of the discourse described above. Her position also conforms with it in another specific regard: her work still represents, first and foremost, a *project* of incorporation of "Islamic" concepts (as well as values, methods, and experiences) into the more general debate on the environment and environmentalism and harnessing the tradition in responding to the ecological troubles. Nevertheless, as I will argue in a while, as much as it is susceptible to critique in concrete instances, Gade's expansive and provocative treatment of the field still provides important lessons and incentives for its further development.

#### 6.2.2.b *Samira Idllalène and the Revival of the Islamic Environmental Law*

Based on the similar ambition to render Islam a productive resource in the rectification of environmental ills and dilemmas is also another recent book, published under the title *Rediscovery and Revival in Islamic Environmental Law: Back to the Future of Nature's Trust* by Samira Idllalène (2021). Idllalène is a Moroccan legal expert and a professor of law at Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakech, long focusing on areas of comparative law, environmental law, and law of the sea, in which she holds a Ph.D from the University of Western Brittany

its elementary physical sense—in fact the entity which the whole „environmental turn“ calls for to be taken in consideration—absents from the „Islamic-environmental“ relations.

184 These, as has been discussed above, also include the fact that the lived Muslim environmentalisms studied by Gade in Indonesia may have been originally incited by the „neocolonialist manipulation“ by external actors like the ARC, which, after all, expressly set out to help „ the world's major faiths develop their own environmental programs“ (see the formulation of the main website, [www.arcworld.org](http://www.arcworld.org)). While this fact is implicitly acknowledged by Gade on many pages of her book, it is never sufficiently explained how it is commensurate with the purported stark opposition between both regimes of Muslim environmentalism.

in Brest, France. By her specialization and occupation, Idlallène is thus not a typical representative of the broader academic field of “Islam and the environment,” and also her work diverts from the characteristic discussions focused either on the relationship between religious concepts and ecology or the Islamic environmental movement as a social phenomenon. Instead, Idlallène’s interest, guided by her distinct professional specialization, is focused on a relatively narrow question of the utilization of Islamic legal categories, most importantly *waqf* (trust or foundation), in the area of applied environmental law, both domestically and internationally. As such, Idlallène’s approach undeniably brings elements of a new perspective and method of elaboration to the debate on “Islam and the environment.” In what follows, I will mostly abstain from assessing the viability of the legal instruments proposed by the author (which comprises a specialized legal and juridical question) but focus instead on its relation to what has been theorized in this dissertation as the Islamic discourse on the environment—as her work consciously appeal to it and uses it as a partial conceptual foundation for her proposal.

Idlallène’s book is structured into five chapters. The first introductory chapter addresses what she views as a “context” of her proposal to apply Islamic environmental law. Here, in the most detailed way, the author also relates to the Islamic environmental discourse writ large, defined here as the “ecological spirituality movement,” which Idlallène recognizes as a highly relevant precursor of her efforts. At the same time, she also addresses the broader question of the status and applicability of Islamic law across Muslim countries and its relationship with European statutory law. Chapter 2 focuses more narrowly on “Islamic environmental law” and its institutions, both from the theoretical perspective and, in a few cases, in terms of its practical application in specific contexts. Chapter 3, titled “The Dormancy of Islamic Environmental Law, ” analyzes the historical reasons why the legal categories and institutions of Islam relevant to environmental regulation and policy are not usually applied. Chapter 4 subsequently begins a move towards the more specific legal agenda and focuses on the comparison between the Anglo-Saxon legal doctrine of *trust* and Islamic *waqf*. Finally, in Chapter 5, Idlallène builds on the preceding discussions to propose a variety of legal instruments to be used in practice, discusses them in

detail, and further compares them with the instruments of English and American law, evaluating their potential together with their applicability.

Considering all these components, Idlallène's book thus stands out within the broader "eco-Islamic" literature for one specific reason: instead of engaging in documenting the commensurability and correspondence of Islam and Islamic norms with environmental tenets in general, it is motivated by a relatively clear and well-defined purpose of developing practical and applicable legal instruments and solutions. Besides that, the Moroccan scholar, and in that she also returns to the earlier period of the discourse and differs from many of its later articulations, does not claim that these instruments necessarily exist in all cases but rather that there is some basis as well as a good reason for their development. As such, Idlallène's approach to the discourse of Islamic environmentalism again displays the rather rare asset of being reflective and critical, which also marks her treatment of it in the initial part of the book.

Idlallène relates to "Eco-Islam" as primarily a historically evolving movement, emerging as a part of the broader trend of "Ecological Spirituality" and "religion and ecology" debate (cf. 6.1.1), and facilitated by the inter-communal cooperation and institutional support by conservationist ENGOs (cf. 4.2; 5.1). Unlike Gade, Idlallène does not view this configuration as any inherent contradiction. Instead, she treats it as a generally positive historical development revolving around a host of major initiatives, most of which have also been analyzed in more detail in this work (cf. Idlallène 2021, 1–8) and to which she also regularly returns in her text to draw inspiration for her own ideas. This, however, does not mean that Idlallène would not assess "Eco-Islam" entirely uncritically. In a number of places, the Moroccan author acknowledges the limits of the movement's social impact (6–8) and inability to influence environmental legislation and policy-making across the Muslim world (12–24). Ultimately, the latter trait is also the motivation for the progress that the whole book aims to achieve.

As Idlallène observes, the potential of Islamic law to address environmental issues has remained comparatively undeveloped within the "eco-Islamic" discourse, which has focused predominantly on the area of ethics or, at most, addressed this law only in general terms and hypothetically (Idlallène 2021,

8–9). On these grounds, the Moroccan legal expert thus proposes to focus on Islamic legal instruments for the sake of environmental protection. Idlallène's assessment of the viability and vitality of such a proposal is based on three arguments. The first one is the insufficiency of the current legal frameworks: although present, the current law in the form of international conventions and statutory law of individual states is not enforced (16–18). Second, Islam, according to Idlallène, possesses a specific quality, not least in distinction to other religious traditions. This comprises the prominence of legal categories and norms within its religious culture wherein not only “law, morality, politics and religion are interconnected,” but the law (the author quotes Joseph Schacht’s dictum) is the “epithome” of Islamic thought and worldview (10). As Idlallène attempts to demonstrate in the rest of her book, these categories are also sufficiently rich and sophisticated to serve the needs of environmental legislation. Finally, the third argument is the assumption that Islamic categories and institutions, culturally rooted in Muslim societies and familiar through their ongoing application in areas of family law but also, e.g., in the institution of *waqf* (which is also subsequently promoted by the author to become a central and basic concept for Islamic environmental law), will be more willfully accepted and implemented than the statutory law (18; see also 12–17).

On this basis, Idlallène thus proposes to draw on the rich Islamic legal tradition as an “advantage” for the current pressing environmental needs. As such, her proposition thus complements the analogous efforts to promote Islamic environmental “values” mainly through the notion of ethics but also expands it and fills the existing gap in the literature—although the Islamic law has been thematized in “eco-Islam,” this occurred only “accidentally, and from an ethical angle” (8; see also 9–12). In the rest of her book, Idlallène provides a detailed survey of Islamic legal categories and historical institutions and outlines various possibilities for reviving them to serve current purposes.

The core idea proposed by the author is the need to develop the *Atmospheric Waqf Doctrine* or *Paradigm* to cover the ultimate issue of global climate change mitigation. At the same time and essentially as a part of it, Idlallène also proposes other legal instruments and doctrines. The utilization of the *waqf* institution, which is otherwise not so frequently considered among other

theoreticians within the Islamic environmental discourse,<sup>185</sup> may be viewed as one of Idllalène's main innovative ideas constituting the core of her legal approach. In its most general sense, *waqf* can be used to establish a fiduciary duty of governments to protect natural resources and climate:

Similar to the classical Waqf, the Atmospheric or global Waqf will have three components: the settlor, which would be the global community, the trustee, which would encompass the government and decision-makers at all levels; and the beneficiary, which would be the global community itself, including non-human beings, natural resources and the climate system at large (142).

Idllalène stresses in her work a number of advantages of *waqf*, rendering it an ideal legal instrument also on lower levels and in more specific cases. This includes its legal perpetuity, preventing its alienation and thus conforming with the tenet of sustainability, but also its flexibility that enables adaptation according to the changing conditions, its ability to encompass rights of non-human beings as its beneficiaries (for which exist historical precedents) and still others (see 2021, 87–110; see also 46–53). At the same time, Idllalène's proposal also spans further, as *waqf* should be integrated with (and virtually become a basis of) *Islamic environmental law*, which should be systematized to constitute a new independent branch in Islamic law (87). In this way, Idllalène also incorporates into her project a host of other considerations, spanning from the review of principal sources (*uṣūl*) on which the new branch of law should build and relevant general ethico-legal categories (many of them like *khilāfa*, *maṣlaḥa*, or *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* being well-known from the writings of other authors)<sup>186</sup> to the issues of practical applicability and possible precedents. Thus, the states with the “Islamic supremacy clause” in their constitutions are viewed as an ideal initial terrain for the expansion of the new law (33; 124–126) and the hitherto issued fatwas, together with other documents emerging from the activist milieu (like the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change) considered as possible precedents (117–

---

185 And this includes, for example, Gade (2019), who barely mentions it in her survey of Muslim environmentalisms.

186 Notably, Idllalène does not join the recent critique of the concept of *khilāfa* furthered by Gade, who views it as artificially transposed from secular and Christian ethics, and Tlili, who views it as inadequately anthropocentric (Tlili 2012, x–xi). For the Moroccan author, the concept instead represents a sound basis for the principle of responsibility, which is crucial for the establishment of explicit legal relations (cf. Idllalène 2021, 90–94).

120; 126–128), while the extant infrastructure of Islamic finance may serve as another potentially useful component (131).

Ultimately, Idllalène’s vision closely complements the longer-term efforts of the eco-Islamic movement and is even outright proposed as a potentially useful instrument of activism (87; 110–111). Here comes also the significance of the analogy with the *Public Trust Doctrine*, which was developed in the 1970s by Joseph Sax as a general instrument for the protection of natural resources. The concept is used by Idllalène as an inspiration throughout her book. The envisioned ideal for Muslim societies and countries is to develop (or revive) the historically weakened institution of *waqf* to fulfill similar purposes (or even surpass them) and render it thus a weapon in the hands of activists to compel governments to fulfill their fiduciary duty in legal litigations (see 27–30, 94–96; see also 63 and the following).

In all these respects, Idllalène’s book thus undeniably represents an innovative contribution to the debate on “Islam and the environment” that diverts from most other accounts. What distinguishes it the most is clearly the focus on the practical application of Islamic law within the current conditions, grounded in the author’s specialized legal perspective. At the same time, Idllalène, as it may be noticed, develops her argument within a productive dialogue with the preceding discourse on Islam and the environment, which can also be considered indispensable to it.<sup>187</sup> Still, what seems significant is that the author does not engage in the debate in a “primordialist” way by merely “uncovering” the inherent Islamic truth about the environment. She states that:

For many Muslim thinkers, “Islamic Environmental Law” is self-evident. However, to an environmental law scholar, talking about Islamic environmental law may seem a bit premature. As such, there is no branch or discipline, properly speaking, called Islamic environmental law. However, there are a few Sharia rules that have some potential to be used for the protection of the environment (Idllalène 2021, 31).

In this regard, Idllalène’s project may be viewed as a proposal for *the construction* of the Islamic environmental-legal system based on pragmatic considerations. As such, this entails the implicit acknowledgment of Islamic

---

<sup>187</sup> As one may ascertain, Idllalène draws many of her concepts as well as concrete examples of the application of Islamic legal institutions (such as fatwas) on environmental matters from the extant practice and literature.

concepts and categories as historically evolving, which also concerns the modern Islamic discourse on the environment, viewed in its limitedness (cf. Idllalène 2021, 139), but rendered thus also as open to further amendment and expansion. Significantly, in her construction of the Islamic environmental law as a new institutional arena to promote environmental conservation, Idllalène abstains from claiming that Islamic categories or legal norms are singular, surpass other institutions and norms, or represent a universal answer to environmental ills and dilemmas (and stays thus away from apologetic agenda; cf. 5.2.3.b; 6.2.1.b). Instead, the Islamic environmental law is to be consciously developed by drawing inspiration from secular legal systems (like in the case of the Public Trust Doctrine), in concord with science and scientific principles (121–123), and complementary to other global environmental norms. Idllalène is also not oblivious to possible obstacles and weaknesses of this approach, comprising the lack of democratic governance in many Muslim countries (145), the presumable resistance to the “Islamization of law” on cultural and geopolitical grounds (137), or the current widespread concurrence of the application of Islamic law and institution with environmentally destructive practice (132)—but her account remains overall tentatively optimistic.

Arguably, Idllalène’s work also possesses a broader relevance for discussing the scholarly approaches in this chapter, namely by showing the potential value of applying more critical perspectives and abandoning the primordialist and apologetic frameworks. The Moroccan scholar, among other things, demonstrates that the application of critical-historical perspective need not mean reneging on the belief in the value of Islamic environmental ethics and historical exemplars that may still be valorized—and perhaps even more productively—even if they are viewed as historical and not absolute. This is even though, as it may be noticed, Idllalène’s work still does not defy the general tendency to approach “Islam and the environment” as an area of theoretical construction—she is, too, engaged in a *project* to implement Islamic values and norms within society.

### 6.2.2.c Sara Tlili and the Value of Historical Criticism

The last work that remains to be discussed is that of Sara Tlili, a US-based scholar working at the University of Florida. Unlike in the case of the previous two examples, Tlili's work is of slightly older date and reaches back already to the early 2010s, when she also published her first book, *Animals in the Qur'an* (2012), followed then by other shorter studies (2014; 2018). The focus on animals and animal ethics is the most distinctive feature of the American scholar's research agenda, which therefore does not cover the whole broad area of the "Islam and the environment" debate but must still be regarded as highly relevant for it as the thematization of the human-animal relations has been shown to comprise one of the key areas of discussion within the discourse. Another distinct trait of Tlili's approach is that it remains almost exclusively "scriptural," i.e., oriented to the analysis of written sources and the interpretative effort to uncover their meaning, which also serves as a means to approach the central ethical concepts of the Islamic tradition as such. From this angle, Tlili's work could be easily seen as staying firmly within the orbit of the majority of the generic—academic and non-academic—Islamic environmental discourse. This would, however, mean ignoring its largely unique trait: the application of critical historical perspective on the Islamic scriptural tradition as well as the employment of other means of critical analysis, in which Tlili's work surpasses most other academic writings on "Islam and the environment" that deal with textual sources.

In her book on *Animals in the Qur'an*, Tlili shows the merit of this historical-critical approach, not least by demonstrating that the very subject of the study presents ample opportunities for its application. Already from the introductory parts of the study, Tlili makes clear what many other authors within the field rarely acknowledge at all, namely that the question of the "environmental" (restricted in this case to the question of animal ethics) meanings of the Qur'an (on which her work predominantly focuses) is by no means simple and offers few opportunities to draw unequivocal conclusions. In the American scholar's work, the debate starts by considering the broad context of human-animal relations. As Tlili notes, these have become a point of controversy during the modern epoch, with the efforts to problematize the inferior status of animals



within human culture and society highlighted, among other things, by modern industrial farming practices and other forms of abuse. Nevertheless, the question of animals' status is, at the same time, a historical one that has permeated human culture from ancient times (Tlili 2012, 3–5). It is also here where the role of religious traditions as the traditional sources of moral values becomes relevant as they necessarily convey judgments about animals' status and the hierarchy between them and humans. Here, the main aim of Tlili's work also comes out, comprising of the attempt to subject the animal-human relations in the Qur'an to a systematic analysis and thereby also document the author's main suggestion—namely that the hierarchical reading of the Qur'an asserting the human superiority is unsubstantiated (8). In this regard, Tlili's work may also be identified with an effort to make a case for non-hierarchical Islamic animal ethics.

If we would seek the basic assumption informing Tlili's debate of Islamic animal ethics and the broader method of her work, it would certainly be that these ethics and the Islamic thinking about animals have been variable and historically evolving. This stance, which distinguishes her from most of the primordialist literature on "Islam and the environment," focused typically on asserting the virtual unity of the "Islamic view," enables Tlili to differentiate between multiple layers of the tradition. The American scholar also gives an extensive space to the discussion and consideration of the exegetic literature (*tafsīr*). This must be seen as important as it enables her to debate in detail the variability of interpretation of the key Qur'anic concepts and subsequently distinguish these interpretations from the author's own reading of their semantic content and implications.

Tlili observes that the status of animals is not a subject of systematic theory in the commentaries and neither elsewhere in the Islamic literature (2012, 42–45). The author thus "assembles" it from various mentions and thematizations and effectively fills this gap. At the same time, she also acknowledges that her own interpretation of the Qur'an, too, is subjective, implicitly conceding her own position as an interpreter and exegete (48). The majority of Tlili's work consists of demonstrating that the conceptual framework surrounding the theme of animals in the Qur'an is dense and complex, necessitating the consideration of multiple different questions and areas of inquiry. There are three main ones in her analysis, beginning with the central question of the hierarchy between humans and non-

human animals and continuing towards a more detailed outlook on the depiction of both animals and humans in the Qur'an. In the course of her analysis, Tlili encounters various motives that have been already discussed above as components of the Islamic environmental catechism (see 2.2.) and are casually used by authors promoting "eco-Islam" to document the "pro-environmental" character of the Islamic revelation. In this regard, Tlili is critical of the simplistic imaginary rendering the creation primarily as "subjected" and subservient to humans as a "blessing" from god (which has been documented to comprise a principal assumption in many texts [see, e.g., Ba Kader et al. 1983; Qaradawi 2001; see also 2.2.2.d]), concluding that "the Qur'an is about God's superiority to and dominion over His creation, rather than the superiority of humans" (Tlili 2012, 114). Even more interestingly, she also criticizes the concept of *khilāfa* ("stewardship"), which is even more universally shared and represents the central ethical qualification on which many of the "environmentalist" readings of the Qur'an are based (see 2.2.2.i). In Tlili's view, not only is the reading of the concept inadequate and flawed from the semantic point of view, but interestingly, the author also debunks the notion of *khalīfa* as a "God's deputy on the earth" partaking on the divine "management" of other parts of the creation as a markedly modern idea, devised and promoted by the modernist exegetes like Iqbal, Qutb, and al-Mawdudi (Tlili 2012, 120; see also 115–123). Arguably, this observation should raise multiple other questions about the historical situatedness and relativity of the "environmentalist interpretations" of Islam and their potential dependence on the very modernist thinking against which their authors typically raise objections. Against the notion of human stewardship and the notions that ascribe to human-natural relations tabular meaning, Tlili proposes a more restrained and considerate reading of the Qur'anic concepts and categories, which evades simplistic conclusions. Upon that, Tlili also bases her own suggestion of a non-anthropocentric reading of the Qur'an, which she presents as primarily a theocentric message wherein "privileged status is contingent on moral and religious uprightness, not species membership" (Tlili 2012, 252). Unlike many other authors who use the argument about the Islamic clemency towards animals in the first place to assert the perfection of the revelation and the tradition, Tlili argues for the redefinition of basic categories in this area in the light of the

Qur'anic revelation, exhorting to eco-centric thinking (252; see also ix) and proposing that humans should treat animals as more of their equals as they can “learn *from* them many valuable lessons” (2012, 256).

As one may note, it is significantly the adoption of the methods of historical criticism and the acceptance of the inherently interpretative, subjective nature of any stance on the issue of animal ethics that enables Tlili to make her case and argument. In this, Tlili consciously and overtly distinguishes her own position from the rest of the tradition, which, as she admits and also systematically documents, has historically embraced an anthropocentric outlook, apparent already in the *tafsīr* literature and the medieval culture (2012, 43, 48) and further enhanced throughout the modern age (xi). For Tlili, it is clear that the majority of Muslims do not live according to the spirit of the Qur'an, which she tries to demonstrate in her reading, and this is due to this historical anthropocentric bias (see also 2018, 15–16). However, this disparity between practice and different readings and positions ultimately enables the critical discussion on ethics. For these reasons, Tlili's position may also be viewed as moving decisively away from apologetic argumentation. This also corresponds with the fact that in her work, she openly and repeatedly discusses and exposes the apologetic agenda as a significant factor in debates on animal ethics in Islam (cf. 2012, 6; 2018, 3–5). Tlili is critical of most of the apologetic literature for the failure to address the theme in all its different aspects (2018, 5) or fundamental premises (cf. 2012, 6), of which the author's main theme of anthropocentrism is clearly the most important one. Except for the Qur'an, Tlili has also applied her critical historical perspective on other strands of literature, such as the well-known *Animal Epistle*, disproving its usual reading as an expression of the egalitarian and ecocentric view (Tlili 2014).

Of all the authors, Tlili thus most poignantly demonstrates the value of the critical historical approach. This is, rather than arguing for a unified position of the tradition on the given matter, focused on uncovering the meanings that circulate within the Islamic assemblage in their multifaceted diversity and sometimes mutual contradictions, even if all invoke the same original “code” of the scriptural corpus. Significantly, Tlili's method also demonstrates a basic fact regarding the application of the critical historical perspective: it does not

compromise the possibility to articulate a normative stance towards environmental matters—and, in fact, the opposite: by allowing to include the multiplicity of views and discuss such a stance more thoroughly, it can ultimately make it stronger.

### **6.2.3 How to Proceed? The Case for Islamic Environmental History**

How can the scholarship on „Islam and the environment“ draw inspiration and learn from the cases of the three authors discussed above, and from the general traits of the Islamic environmental discourse, both academic and non-academic, analysed in this work? Arguably, this depends, among other things, on the aims of the given research. There are multiple directions in which the study may proceed and multiple themes on which it may focus—after all, all three discussed texts follow specific areas of postcolonialism, environmental law, and animal ethics (equally as this dissertation demarcated its area of interest by the specific concept of the modern Islamic environmental discourse). The choice of the theme also in each case necessarily determines the choice of used methods.

Still, all three preceding texts arguably share one significant trait which points toward a possible direction in which field could develop—and, in fact a vast terrain open to research that has been hitherto barely touched. What is this common trait?

#### **6.2.3.a *The Merit of the Reflective Approach and the Way Forward from Primordialism***

Arguably, what all three authors share is that they self-consciously relate to the debate on “Islam and the environment,” displaying a clear awareness of its essential aspect of constituting a specific area of question, or in other words, a *field* or a *discourse*. As it may be noticed, the modalities, as well as the outcomes of this reflective approach, considerably differ among all three cases.

In the case of Gade, the attitude towards the field is strongly critical and skeptical, with the American author presenting much of the extant discursive

expressions of “Islamic environmentalism” as an artificial construct, which ultimately serves the instrumental interests of other actors (see particularly 2019, 41–76). This is even though Gade, notably, is not fully consistent in her constructivism. As it has been shown, in her treatment of the primary scriptural sources of Islam, she very much argues for their inherent “environmental” meaning. In contrast, Idllalène evaluates the extant discourse differently and more approvingly. Even if the “eco-Islamic” movement clearly comprises, in her view, a historically evolving movement characteristic of the contemporary period and influenced by the wider notion of “ecological spirituality” (see Idllalène 2021, 1–8), she evaluates it as a positive phenomenon, which deserves to be further developed and may become a basis for the legal reform proposed by the author. Finally, for Tlili, given her focus on the Qur’an and the older historical tradition as material for interpretation, the current discourse is comparatively less important. But she still systematically relates to it nevertheless, and this is as to the locus where interpretations about human-animal relations emerge, providing the author with the opportunity for critical reflection and re-evaluation (2012, 3–11; see also 2018).

These differences, however, change nothing about the fact that all three authors, in various ways and to various degrees, treat the Islamic stance towards environmental questions as historically contingent and socially constructed. This, by itself, must be seen as a significant step beyond what has been described above as the primordialist position. In fact, for either of the three authors, the question is not anymore solely one of uncovering and retrieving the primordial Islamic “values” from the scriptural sources (or any other resource of the virtual Islamic „essence”), but it is also one of how these “values” are enacted, in what contexts they occur, and, potentially, how they may result into different or even contradictory conclusions.

Arguably, this reflective attitude not only widens the scope of transmitted information and knowledge but, in the case of all three authors, also enables them to develop their specific research agenda in a productive way. For Gade, it is the identification of the influence of NGOs and other international “power structures” standing behind the particular version of the Islamic environmental discourse (2019, 37ff) that enables her to argue for broadening this discourse to consider and

embrace the non-conventional attitudes, arising, among other things, from the lived experience and enactment of Muslim environmentalism. For Idllalène, it is the essential observation that Islamic environmental legal institutions are not being applied (not least because they have not been systematized into an applicable legal framework [2021, 8–9, 31–32]) that enables her to step in and make an effort to develop Islamic environmental law and the *Atmospheric Waqf Paradigm*. Finally, for Tlili, it is the acknowledgment that the Islamic animal ethics as it is normally understood is neither unique nor perfect, succumbs to bias, and may not have been even articulated in earnest (2012, 45) that motivates her rigorous analysis of the Qur’anic ethics and semantics, striving for a new and more profound understanding of this ethics.

This does not mean that such a step would completely undo the problems tied to the primordialist perspective or lack of criticism. Gade (2019) thus, for example, does not put to critical historical scrutiny the older layers of the Islamic tradition, which she evaluates casually and very much in concord with the apologetic agenda, as unequivocally and uniquely constructive and speaking directly to present problems. And as it has been shown (6.2.2.a), her criticism of the contemporary field is, in many cases, contestable, too. In the case of Idllalène (2021), it is also difficult to speak about the systematic and sufficiently critical historical analysis of the contemporary “eco-Islam,” which she treats mainly as a source of legal precedents and arguments, ignoring its potential inner divergences (and potentially also overestimating its outreach; in this regard, it has to be, however, stressed that her work is not historical, but legal in nature; see also 6.2.2.b). In contrast, in the studies by Tlili (2012; 2014; 2018), historical criticism, however, seems to be the very core of the author’s method and is applied consistently and almost uniquely also on the pre-modern sources, which, instead of being viewed as flawless, are analyzed in their historical contingency and situatedness; in the case of the Qur’an, this historical critique is then applied through acknowledging its ambiguity and openness to different interpretations.

Notwithstanding the differences, the reflective and, to various degrees, critical view seems to be the point of departure and the main contribution of all three authors. It comprises the main ingredient that distinguishes their works from the generic primordialist discourse on “Islam and the environment.” How can this

movement beyond the impasse of the primordialist approach be further valorized, and what incentives does it make for further research?

### 6.2.3.b *The Potential of the Environmental-Historical Perspective*

It may be proposed that the defining trait of all three above-discussed works ultimately consists in the way in which they relate to and contend with *Islamic environmental history*. The inquiry into such history has been determined as the main theoretical and methodological framework at the beginning of this work, where the subject of this history has also been defined as a study of the interaction between the Islamic tradition and *assemblage* and the environment throughout the historical time, with the interaction between both constituents occurring in both material and ideational realms (see 1.2.2.c; see also McNeill 2003; 2010; Hughes 2016). But what makes environmental history relevant for the debate on “Islam and the environment” in the last instance?

Arguably, the main reason for its relevance, and one which may now be seen more clearly, is that the majority of the argumentation within this debate and the whole Islamic environmental discourse *is*, in fact, historical. This, after all, must be seen as, to a large degree, natural and predictable and returns to the character of Islam as a historical tradition and assemblage (cf. 1.2.1.b). It is, then, hard to miss that most authors, even if fully embracing the primordialist perspective and engaging in an overtly apologetic argumentation, either explicitly or implicitly invoke history as a central and crucial point of reference in their discourse. This trait has been documented from the very first thematization of the environmental crisis from the Islamic perspective by Nasr, who ascribed it to the historically evolving spiritual crisis in men and the modern desacralization of nature ([1968] 1990). This basic idea has since been repeated in various iterations and modifications (see particularly 3.2.2; 5.1.2). This relating to history may take various forms and comprise judgments about the past as well as about the present, attributing significance to historical institutions, actors, and practices, relating to history in terms of ideas and concepts, determining causal relationships between various phenomena, and even making predictions about future. Arguably, even if

the historical arguments are not explicitly made and the “ecothology” or “environmental ethics” of Islam is transmitted merely by quoting excerpts from the Qur’an and hadith, the derived tenets are still proposed in an implicit relation to history, for example, by representing the original “intended” meanings of the tradition (and not mere contemporary constructs) or by the conviction, that they, as the heritage from the past, are capable of changing the present and future.

Arguably, it is also here where the substantial deficiency of the primordialist approach may be most clearly noticed. Its main problem is that it is not motivated by a genuine interest in history and the pursuit of historical knowledge but rather *instrumentalizes* history to advance its predetermined theses and imaginaries. In such a process, history often gets distorted, reduced, or sidelined, and as such, it may then translate into a mythological view of the past as well as unrealistic expectations from the future.

It is the hegemony of primordialism within the Islamic environmental discourse that may also ultimately explain the already discussed fact that there has been very little genuine historical research in Islamic environmental history, and this is to the point that it barely exists as an area of inquiry (see 2.2.2c; Mikhail 2013a, 9; 2017, 14). The reason may be viewed in that, by and large, the question about “Islam and the environment” has been hitherto answered mainly through the “catechism,” i.e., by setting the normative precepts of how “the environment” is viewed and approached from the eternal and essential “Islamic perspective.”

Nevertheless, the examples of the authors who attempted at least partly to divert from this predetermined approach show that this attitude may be ultimately mistaken and may impoverish the debate on the relationship between Islam and ecology—and this is not only from the “empirical” perspective (i.e., one aiming to bring the information *about* the phenomena of “Islamic environmentalism” as a part the more general inquiry about Islam or the contemporary society) but also from the “engaged” perspective and the substantial debate on Islamic ethics, law, and theology. In contrast, they show that accepting the historical development and contingency of Islamic values, concepts, and “ecothologies” may ultimately represent an asset rather than a liability. By approaching the particular environmental histories critically and spotting the inconsistencies and weaknesses (i.e., the superficiality of the NGO-driven discourse in the case of Gade, the



inexistence of the proper legal framework in the case of Idllalène, and the inadequacy of historically evolved interpretations of particular Qur'anic concepts in the case of Tlili), all three authors have been able to achieve progress in developing the discourse further and widening the basis of the shared knowledge. Notably, this is even though neither of them has approached the question in a purely detached and disinterested way, and all three align with the more general shared goal of rendering Islam a productive “moral force” in contending with ecological problems and dilemmas. This also shows that applying the critical historical perspective does not, in any sense, mean the abandonment of the religious perspective and belief in the given tradition's veracity, perfection, and ability to speak to the present.

Throughout the preceding chapters, I have attempted to propose my own reading of a particular segment of Islamic environmental history through the analysis of what has been defined as the modern Islamic environmental discourse. In it, I have attempted to show that this discourse, which also embraces the debates on Islamic ecotheology and environmental ethics, must be viewed as historically contingent and inextricably linked with the more general notion of the environment and environmental crisis as well as the *fact* of the modern ecological transformation itself, which makes it meaningful in the last instance. I have also attempted to document its inner heterogeneity and dependence on a variety of external influences in the form of actors, cultures, and social contexts, including the crucial influence of academic research and production discussed in this chapter.

Does this work thus give some definitive answer about the relationship between “Islam and the environment?” Certainly not, and, in fact, quite the opposite: It only highlights the limitedness of our current knowledge of Islamic environmental history, which has barely been touched upon. Arguably, there is ample space for historical research in this regard, particularly in two areas.

### 6.2.3.c *Further Avenues for Environmental-Historical Research*

The first one comprises Islamic *intellectual* environmental history, particularly in the pre-environmentalist period. How were nature and what is

called today “the environment” represented in the older layers of Islamic thinking, how did such conceptualizations differ from the current ones investigated in this work, and how did they change in time? It may be argued that the current state of the discussion within the field, revolving under the dominance of the primordialist perspective, does not give credible answers to such questions. In this regard, the work of Sara Tlili, who has pioneered this research in the area of animal ethics, can serve as an inspiration and be built upon. Tlili has, after all, thematized in her analysis also some concepts of broader relevance (like the notion of hierarchy between man and nature signified by the concepts of *khilāfa* or *taskhīr* [cf. 2012] and the general problem of anthropocentrism [see 2012; 2014]). There are also other individual studies that may serve as a basis for the effort in this area (Mazoor 2003; Heuer, Kellner-Heinkele & Schönig 2016; Hämeen-Antilla 2017, Fortuny 2021), together with the rich historical literature and research in Islamic intellectual history, medieval philosophy, and other related fields. All these sources are open for re-assessment and systematization as well as supplementation by more narrowly focused studies.

Of particular interest may be then the specific period of Islamic history, signifying the encounter of the Islamic assemblage with modernity. Modernity is typically blamed in the Islamic environmental discourse for aborting the integrity of the Islamic tradition through the negative effects of colonialism and foreign intellectual influences (see, e.g., Nasr [1968] 1990, 17–24; Haider 1984, 170–172; Kaminski 2018, 177). Nonetheless, such blanket judgments actually say very little about the actual process of reception and reaction to the profound changes in the conceptualization of nature and the universe, as well as the practice of encountering and manipulating nature that marked this era. Also, here, Tlili provides some interesting hints by showing that the modernist influences may have, in fact, enhanced the anthropocentric and hierarchical notions of man and nature, which may be very much still actual and dominant, shaping even the expressions of the pro-environmental thinking in Islam (2012, 120). And, also here, the debate focusing specifically on “Islam and the environment” may draw on extant studies that undoubtedly relate to it and deserve to be considered and integrated into it (Elshakry 2013; Kamaly 2018 Halevi 2021). Crucially, to answer this question, the inquiry must not pay attention only to the “positive” examples in

which nature is cherished or approached in a way reverberating with contemporary sentiments, but it should equally as well reflect on the processes and changes that may not fit in the narrative about the Islamic tradition as a harbinger of ecological harmony and balance.<sup>188</sup>

Still, as far as research in the area of Islamic intellectual environmental history is crucial, the application of the environmental-historical perspective would arguably stay halfway if it did not focus on yet another question. And this is the situatedness of Islam within the natural environment in its material and physical sense and the mutual influence between the two realms. The influence goes both ways, so there is certainly a possibility of discussing the historical influence of the Islamic tradition *on* the environment—perhaps also in the reverberation of the modern efforts to valorize religious morality in changing the ecological policies and conditions during the environmental crisis that has comprised a major theme of this work. Nevertheless, it is necessary to stress that the debate in this area will always be problematic. While there are authors keen to draw conclusions from the situation in particular historical periods relevant to the character of the tradition as a whole (see Kaminski 2018, 176–177), it is clear that it is usually hardly possible to distinguish the specifically *religious* influences on particular historical practices and processes. As such, the *Islamic* always remains hidden in the broader category of the *Islamicate* (cf. Hodgson 1974, 56) in this specific area of material interactions, even in possible exceptions, like the religious influences on the treatment of animals (Tlili 2012, 3; 2018, 1–2), can be conceived and further discovered.

Therefore, a more promising area of inquiry and consideration may ultimately be how the environment, and more specifically, the situatedness of Islam in it and in the particular environmental-historical context, may have

---

<sup>188</sup> One of such contravening narratives is proposed by Hossein Kamaly, who—against many opinions discussed above—ascribes to the pre-modern Islamic thinking a „deep-rooted negative and derogatory conception of nature” that only “gradually gave way to a positive and celebratory one based on modern science“ (2018, 1). According to Kamaly, the older religious and cultural outlook posited a contrast between nature and the heavens, with the former ascribed mainly to an inferior status of turbidity and transience existing only to be transcended and escaped from by moving closer to the latter—representing God’s omnipotence and eternal life. This was only around the turn of the 20th century supplanted by a new worldview that introduced a new unified concept of nature and “natural” and elevated it above the formerly venerated realm of “supernatural,” which became now identified with irrationality and superstition (Kamaly 2018, 3–5). This process, followed by the author in the rest of his book, represents clearly only a fraction of the turbulent changes witnessed in this period.

actually influenced the religious tradition and culture. Arguably, this influence can be investigated across the vast swaths of Islamic history that continuously occurred in particular (urban, agricultural, pastoral, nomadic) settings marked by the material exchange with ecosystems and natural systems, and from the environmental perspective, such influences should be taken in account and considered along the developments within the realm of the “high” intellectual culture (to which, religion is too often reduced; against this trend see the recent studies in material religion [Plate 2015]). Arguably, such research may be again particularly valid in the area of the transition towards modernity, identified above (3.1.1) as the precursor of current environmental problems as well as the awakening in the intellectual sphere, which they have caused. How did modern environmental transformation affect the Islamic assemblage?

The potential of this question to redefine some basic understanding of Islamic history may be illustrated, e.g., on the question of fossil fuels, one which is now addressed from the Islamic perspective in a normative way (see Abdul-Matin 2010, 77; IFEES 2015) but kept intervening into the history of the tradition in a marked way before. Particularly, the Middle East, as one of the culturally most significant regions of the Islamic world, has had a special relationship with coal and oil as the two central drivers of industrial and environmental modernity.

In this sense, it is, among other things, the almost complete lack of coal in the MENA region which may be considered an important factor in its succumbing to colonialism and the dominance of European states (Atalay 2015; Barak 2015), even to the point, that some authors define it as a decisive environmental factor in the region’s history (McNeil 2013, 28, 41–45), or speak in this regard about “coalonialism” (Barak 2015, 426). Needless to say, the factor of coal was, in the subsequent period, replaced by oil, which substantially transformed the regional economic and political landscape and served as an important vehicle of colonization and foreign intervention as well (see Mitchell 2011). How did these processes influence Islam and even the formulation of Islamic ideas? From the concentration of the oil wealth in particular countries (like Saudi Arabia, which also used it to export specific religious doctrines, as it has been, after all, touched on also in this work; see 3.2.1) to the inequality, relations of dependence and the very tangible effects on the environmental well-

being at specific places, this relationship clearly offers many areas for inquiry. These are among many other relevant ones regarding the intersection between Islam and environmental history, which, as a continuously developing field, has much to offer to the debate on Islam and the environment, as has been already mentioned (see 1.2.2.c).

Admittedly, this is an area for potentially an expansive and intricate discussion, which also possesses a historico-philosophical dimension and may upend some long-accepted narratives. Yet, arguably, such a discussion can hardly be avoided if the *environmental perspective* and paradigm are to be fulfilled, as it would contradict its very basic principles if we would consider Islam and the Islamic *ecothology* mere ideational phenomena severed from the environmental interactions that influence any other part of human culture and history.

# Conclusion

By finishing the theme of the role of academia, the fourth major component, partaking in the articulation and circulation of what was defined in the beginning as Islamic environmental discourse, has been covered. What has this analysis, stretched on almost 500 pages, recounting more than 50 years of history, covering multiple geographical locations across the globe, introducing a number of individual and institutional actors, dissecting a multiplicity of texts and statements, and reviewing a heterogeneity of ideas, opinions, and doctrinal positions, revealed?

Hopefully, to the very least, it has shown that the encounter with the theme of the environment and the diversity of questions, problems, and dilemmas surrounding it comprises, in one way or another, one of the components of contemporary Islam. This may lag behind many others, such as those connected to politics or social conflicts, in terms of perceived importance. But for many believers, it is a part of their religious identity and experience. The opinions on the themes of pollution, climate change, or wildlife extinction are among those that are sought from their religion, together with guidance on how to relate to such questions in everyday life. The notion that Islam commands environmental protection and ecological conscience is a part of self-image, may become a source of pride and persuasion about the veracity of their own creed, and molds the image of the Islamic tradition as perceived by outsiders.

What is the nature and character of this “environmentalist creed” within Islam? Apparently, there are two answers to this question: one simpler and one more difficult. Already at the beginning of this work, I started with a basic distinction that has been since thematized several times, and this is between the “primordialist” on the one hand and the “critical” or “social-constructivist” view of the whole problem on the other. For the former view, the relationship between

“Islam and the environment” derives from the content of the tradition itself, and that is from what authoritative sources of the tradition say to the question. And for the latter? Arguably, one of the outcomes of the analysis above is that the answer to this question is not all that simple.

Up till now, much of the scholarly literature published about “Islam and the environment” has been content with accepting the primordialist perspective in part or as a whole and giving credence to its underlying idea that “environmental ethics” is at least in its basic contours “coded” in the sacred scriptures of the tradition and the broader message and worldview that they convey. So, what is the reason for diverting from this view and applying a different perspective? And does that mean that the idea of the existence of fundamental values conveyed by the tradition is flawed and should be refuted once and for all?

Through pointing to the inherent multiplicity and sometimes mutual incongruence of the “Islamic views” of the environment as well as their connection to and sometimes dependence on other ideas, worldviews, and conceptual frameworks, the preceding pages presented an inherent (and in many cases also explicit) critique of the primordialist perspective. Nevertheless, as it is useful to point out, this strategy has not been ultimately motivated by the conviction that such a perspective would be *a priori* flawed and that it would be illegitimate to seek in the Islamic tradition definite meanings (no matter if motivated by a religious theistic view or other methodological or philosophical commitments) or necessary to approach it as a mere social construct. If we return to Paul Feyerabend and his tenet of methodological anarchism (see 1.2.2.a), it is clear that there are no good reasons for excluding primordialism on these grounds, and as I will yet mention, there may even be good reasons to give credence to the hypothesis that Islam *conveys* a particular “ecological message.”

Arguably, primordialism needs to be challenged on different grounds. And this is primarily on the grounds of its dominance in both the religious and academic debate that, due to its limitedness as a perspective, hampers the progress of knowledge. The idea that the Islamic view of the environment is “coded” in the tradition in a definite way and that it does not undergo historical transformation and change is unable to explain the broader realities of the relationship between “Islam and the environment,” both in the intellectual and discursive sphere, but

also the “material” sphere signifying the existence of Islam in the environmental context.

For these reasons, I have programmatically abstained from approaching the whole problem through the prism of essential values and ethics and by proposing judgments about “Islam” “as such.” Instead, I have opted to look at the debate or—to stick to the main social-scientific category that has filled up the preceding pages—the *discourse*. This has been defined as *historical*, i.e., occurring on a temporal plane and undergoing development, and present in a *social context*, i.e., molded by actors, conveyed by the circulation of texts and statements, and influenced by other ideas, concepts, and social processes. In part to make the study manageable in terms of extent and partly on substantive grounds, I have also willfully limited the inquiry to a particular temporal span, delimited by what has been, crucially, identified as the new understanding of *the environment*, proliferating universally from the 1960s and also being explicitly used as a term. To what degree this separation is correct and meaningful in the context of religious (and specifically Islamic) discourse is certainly a matter of further debate—but there are strong hints for that from the above-made analysis. Let me thus now briefly recount the outcomes of this analysis.

After preliminary discussions in the first two chapters, which focused on theorizing the fundamental relationship between the *multiplicity* and *homogeneity* of the religious discourse (and partly also between the *natural* and the *social*; I will yet return to both of these discussions), I made four inroads into particular phases of the development of “Islamic environmentalism” as well as social and cultural milieus in which it has emerged and keeps to circulate.

Chapter 3 focused on the very first occurrence of the discourse on Islam and the environment in the 1960s and beyond, in the wake of the proliferation of the so-called new environmentalism and the overall change it has brought into the perception and cognition of the world around us and the relationship between material and social. Particularly through the example of S. H. Nasr (and still a few other texts), I have documented how Muslim authors first reacted to the findings about man’s ability to fundamentally alter the natural environment and endanger the very conditions of human and non-human life in it by stirring ecological crises and attempted to evaluate them through religious prism. Through that, I have also



identified what has been proposed to be the primary and the most persistent motive of the Islamic *responses* to ecology, namely the effort to match the apparent moral and philosophical consequences of the fact of the ecological crisis with the basic precepts of religious creed and morality. At the same time, the chapter also revealed that these responses were initially extremely scattered and occurred only on the margins of the global Islamic culture, failing to generate a broader popular interest, social movement, or even a unified discursive field.

In Chapter 4, I investigated the first significant aspect of the process in which the discourse moved from this situation of marginality and near non-existence and began to circulate among a greater variety of actors and swaths of the public. This has been identified as the engagement of institutions—both “secular” and “Islamic”—which, from the 1980s, began to produce documents and statements transmitting the “Islamic view” of ecology and environmental problems and systematically promote them in the public sphere. I have attempted to unravel the historical and social roots of the initiation of these activities and followed their further development and variation. By that, I have shown that institutions have played a significant role in spreading “Islamic environmentalism” but also brought a new motive and motivation into it. This has been marked by the still persistent imaginary that Islamic environmental values and morality may become an effective instrument for achieving social change and fulfilling conservationist goals. The chapter also thematized the achievements as well as apparent limitations and failings of this strategy.

In Chapter 5, I shifted the focus from the major institutions disposing of organizational capacity and functioning globally to the multiplicity of actors who, for some reason or another, adopted the discourse as a part of their identity, took part in its dissemination, and, in some cases, rendered it a basis for social activism and advocacy. I have more closely investigated four cases of such an engagement. By tracking their origins and emergence and evaluating their concrete and local specificities, I have supplemented the overall picture of the heterogeneity of the Islamic environmental discourse and its impacts, showing that “Islamic environmentalism” has been adopted wholeheartedly in some social contexts and less so in others and that its expressions as well as the imagined values which it represents may differ significantly from case to case. This capacity of the

discourse to be adapted and molded to different ends and become a part of broader doctrinal or ideological agendas has been identified as another broader general characteristic. At the same time, its capacity to signify a particular social identity by itself has also been proposed as one of the possible sociological explanations of why the Islamic “eco-movement” emerged in some contexts and not in others.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I focused on the development of the academic debate on “Islam and the environment.” I have shown how Islam has been slowly incorporated into the broader discussion on “religion and ecology,” which started in American universities in the 1970s and ultimately received a platform of its own through a series of conferences and publications in the early 2000s after which the articles surveying the Islamic environmental values and ethics began to proliferate, transforming into a generic theme and point of discussion from various angles. I have proposed that this process, too, contributed to the proliferation of the Islamic environmental discourse in its other manifestations by establishing networks of actors and disseminating the tropes and motives of what has been earlier defined as the shared virtual catechism. As a part of that, the chapter also again drew attention to the dominance of the primordialist perspective, discussed already in the initial part, and further accentuated its shortcomings, comprising of the lack of critical debate and progress towards different possible approaches to the relationship between Islam and the environment that could be beneficial even for the articulation of the normative Islamic posture itself. In the final part of the chapter, I have attempted to propose such avenues, capitalizing on the efforts of the few authors who tried to trespass the limits of the current discourse.

Upon this summary, it is now possible to proceed towards a couple of final questions. The first of them is: what are the general traits of the Islamic environmental discourse revealed by its analysis? Arguably, the most salient of them is its plurality. In the beginning, I opted for the *theory of assemblages* (1.2.1.a) as a general theoretical tool to investigate the subject, and at this place, this choice should be finally vindicated. This plurality goes far beyond the mere doctrinal plurality within the tradition that may be observed in the case of most questions or plurality of “sects” and associations occurring within any religious community. In fact, the plurality of the Islamic environmental discourse seems to

surpass and evade the imaginary of a „religious movement“ emerging from within the bounded community of believers. It forms a vast assemblage of both Muslim and non-Muslim actors, institutions, and discourses.

In Chapter 3 (see 3.2.1.a), it has been shown how the first thematization of ecology from the Islamic perspective occurred in specific circumstances—it happened in the US through a young Iranian scholar brought up with reverence for traditional Iranian mysticism, who later studied geophysics and history of science and adhered to the Western esoteric Traditionalist doctrine, to publish his thoughts in English for Anglophone audience. This pattern subsequently repeated time and again, with the first institutional document on Islamic environmental tenets emerging thanks to the cooperation between the leading global ENGO and one of the most conservative regimes in the Muslim world, and the first Islamic declaration on ecology being apparently initiated by a member of the British royal family (see 4.2.1). The Western secular ENGOs and global institutions like the UN continued (and still do) their efforts to sponsor the engagement of Muslim actors with ecology (see 4.2.2; 5.1.4.b), while the Islamic organizations and governments of Muslim states often articulated the discourse specifically for the sake of presentation on international forums (see 4.2.3). Another impulse came from the prestigious Anglophone universities, where Muslim scholars were given institutional support and incentivized to voice their views on “Islam and ecology” and contribute by essays to collections edited by “secular” scholars of Islam and religion (a format which stays popular). On the other hand, the discourse has also been adopted by traditionalist and conservative scholars (5.1.2), took root in the Indonesian *pesantren* (5.1.4), and was even echoed by Islamists (5.1.3). From this perspective, it may not be a complete surprise that tangible Islamic environmental movements have been most successful rather on the margins of the Muslim world and in settings where multiple identities and religious cultures coexist.

This all points to the fact that “Islamic environmentalism” has been emerging from the *exterior* relationships of exchange and encounter—not infrequently between the “religious” and the “secular”—rather than from the interior movement within the tradition and community. Arguably, this also corresponds with the basic orientation of the discourse toward the outside, i.e., the

environmental relationships and the crisis that occurs in the outer, not only social but also the natural world.

Along with this plurality of actors and influences, a similar plurality may also be evidenced in the process of the emergence of the Islamic environmentalist discourse. This has not spread as a single unified tradition or sequence of texts following one another in a genealogical sequence, and much less as a movement joined behind a common goal. The *response* to ecology and the ecological crisis has come several times and from different directions, sometimes without apparent links between the respective discourses. The authors who attempted to „Islamicize“ the emerging Saudi institutional infrastructure of environmental protection (see 4.2.1.a) thus seem not to have taken account of Nasr’s philosophizing comments (see 3.2.1) on the spiritual crisis (and perhaps were not even cognizant of it), and Osama bin Laden seems to have been unaware of the „Islamic environmentalism“ in raising his concerns about the climate change (5.1.3.a). A similar disparity has been registered on other occasions, especially in the early phase of the discourse. From a particular point in time, the linkages between various strands, however, were established thanks to the activity of institutions and academia, and global networks emerged—even if these remained largely deterritorialized, and the discursive field remained fragmented (a salient example of this disparity is the specificity of the discourse of scholars; see 5.1.2).

Finally, this plurality has also been reflected in the diversity of the discourse that, as it has been thoroughly documented, has revolved around various goals and aspirations (including the “spiritual revolution,” building of Islamic institutions of environmental protection, and adjustments in individual lifestyle; cf. 5.2.2) and employed different modes of expression and argumentation. This illustrates that, as has already been proposed in the introduction, no such thing as the generalized and coherent “Islamic view” of environmental problems can be tangibly evidenced in reality.

What has been then, however, the unifying element of „Islamic environmentalism“ that enables us even to speak about one „discourse“? Arguably, this has been, in the first place, its common orientation toward the theme of *ecology*. Crucially, this, as it has been stressed, must not be mistaken for the basic human condition of existing „within nature“ (even if it, in the most

general terms, returns to it) but is signified by the existence within the volatile natural environment, which was as a subject of cognition and reflection, made salient by the *modern environmental transformations* (marked by the unprecedented modern manipulation of this environment; cf. 3.1.1.) and articulated in its full and consequential sense by the new-environmentalist discourse and the idea of (since then ever-present) *ecological crisis* (3.1.2). It has been proposed that this notion also renders *the environment* relevant for religious reflection, eliciting the basic reaction in the form of a *moral response* to the imaginary of the world threatened by destruction (see again 3.3.1).

This response has been constant and generic and has taken the form of virtually an unequivocal view, namely that the world created by God and the life-sustaining environmental conditions shall not be destroyed by the unrestrained action of humanity.

It is also here that we may recognize the origins of the effort to seek motives in the scriptural tradition that speak to the problem and ultimately coalesce into a more or less homogeneous *catechism* shared across the different strands of the discourse. These may concern the character and status of nature, such as in the verse reading, „And there is no creature on the earth or bird that flies with its wings except communities like you” (6:38). Or they may more directly relate to human action expounded still with a loose reference to the natural world, such as in the dictum, “corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by what the hands of people have done so He may let them taste part of what they have done that perhaps they will return” (30:41). As it has been shown, the elements of the textual tradition that may be interpreted in a similar vein are numerous and also encompass hadith and other genres of the Islamic literature (see 2.2.2). Their existence undeniably bears witness to the comprehensiveness of the revelation and tradition and its ability to speak to the problems of human life in their entirety, including the fundamental fact of human being in nature. On the other hand, it may be proposed that it is not primarily their *literal* meaning that determines the overall shared form of the Islamic response to ecology (i.e., the consensual view that Islam commands environmental protection and prohibits harm) but that the situation is rather opposite: it is the more general and basic intention of this response that ultimately determines the concrete way of reading

of the scriptures. At least, this is suggested by the evidenced variances in this response, such as those between the “conservationist” tendency promoting the “managerial” attitude toward nature with the stress on its unhampered utilization (epitomized, e.g., by the Saudi *Islamic Principles*; see 3.2.1.a) and the less anthropocentric, reverential, and “preservationist” tendencies registered elsewhere (see also 5.2.1). Conceivably, if the moral response to the ecological crisis took the form of its denial (e.g., as a forged instrument to harm Muslim societies by preventing them from development) or affirmation (e.g., as a rightful fulfillment of God’s predestined plan), different readings of the same tradition could be given. Such a contingency may also be substantiated by pointing to the readings of the tradition that do not thematize ecology at all and that seems to still largely prevail among Muslims who, for one reason or another, have not become acquainted with the environmental discourse in Islam. If this presupposition is right, it also means that Lynn White’s thesis about the dependence of human ecology on the religious outlook discussed above a couple of times must be refuted—the relationship probably operates rather the other way around (see 3.1.2.c; 3.3.1; see also 5.1.1.d).

How can this simultaneous occurrence of the twin essential characteristics of heterogeneity and homogeneity eventually be comprehended in their mutual relationship? Arguably, it returns to yet another significant trait of the Islamic environmental discourse that may be suggested on the basis of its analysis in this work: its *hybridity* ensuing from combining two different “codes.” These comprise, on the one hand, the normative code of the tradition (most significantly, the explicit code conveyed by scriptures) and, on the other, what may be conceived as the “code” of ecology—determined by the material flows of the environment and transmitted primarily by science (if also experience and observation, and the popular, political, humanistic, artistic and other receptions of scientific findings). Arguably, the Islamic environmental discourse may be then viewed as a mediation between these two spheres. This may occur in either of two ways.

The first and the more intuitively apparent one is the modified interpretation of the religious tradition, whereby it is subjected to ecological normativity (i.e., made consistent with its code). This may be ultimately

condensed into a simple thesis: *what is ecological is also religiously sanctioned*. Apparently, the analysis of “Islamic environmentalism” has provided plentiful examples of this kind, among which it is necessary to count also the whole shared catechism that does, ultimately, nothing else than matching the elements of the tradition to different ecological concerns and agendas (see 2.2.2.). In such a case, we may then also speak about the *detrterritorialization* of the Islamic normativity that thus becomes less determinate and specific and is supplanted by different normative principles (see also 1.2.1.a; 1.2.1.b). We have witnessed examples of such detrterritorialization, e.g., in the civic discourse of Abdul-Matin, who goes as far as to partly free his concept of “Green Deen” from its Islamic specificity and apply it universally (see 5.1.1.d) or in the cases of some Islamic institutions, such as ISESCO, which in its latter statements reduced the presence of explicit Islamic normative principles and used the notion of Islamic normativity virtually as a sanction for the global environmental agenda under the direction of UNEP (see 4.2.3.a). Many other examples of this kind could be given.

Still, there is also a second possibility of how this mediation between the realms of “Islamic” and “ecological” may occur. In such a case, the re-coding occurs the other way around in the realm of ecology. This happens when the interpretation of what is “ecological” is subjected to particular religious agendas and concerns. Again, we have witnessed various examples of these redefinitions, such as in the claims that ecological practice is incongruous with the use of drugs and alcohol (see 4.2.1.a; 4.2.3.a), that it also covers the rules of personal hygiene, or that it necessitates the establishment of an Islamic state and other institutions (for examples of such opinions see 5.1.1.b; 5.1.2.c). The most salient and systematic effort to avoid detrterritorialization and instead *reterritorialize* Islamic normativity has been evident in the discourse of Yusuf al-Qaradawi and other similar texts by conservative scholars, resulting even in the notion that may be paraphrased as *there is no ecology outside of the religious orthodoxy* (see 5.1.2.b; 5.1.2.c). As shown, al-Qaradawi’s and other similar attempts, however, did not succeed in creating “authentic” Islamic institutions for environmental protection or a tangible movement for their establishment.

Arguably, this *hybridity* of the Islamic (and perhaps any other religious) environmental discourse holds a peculiar and significant consequence. That is,

religion cannot, in and by itself, provide specific normative tenets for the “conduct toward nature” and contribute, thus, in this specific way, to the resolution of ecological crises and dilemmas. Such tenets, norms, and precepts for concrete action must be necessarily derived primarily from the realm of ecology and ultimately guided by the extrinsic subject of all ecological thinking—the material environmental relations between the living and non-living elements of nature themselves (I have partly thematized them in this work, too; see 3.1.1). This, as a matter of course, does not mean that religion could not contribute in other ways, like by its uncompromising stance towards morality, its incorporation of asceticism as a meaningful attitude toward life, and its inherent tendency to approach the question of human existence in the world in a more comprehensive manner than many other attitudes, surpassing the focus on immediate self-interest and embracing the realm of transcendence. Its role, however, should not be determined or conditioned by the presence of concrete “environmental tenets” in the given tradition or its normative perfection and ability to speak to all environmental questions at all times.

This ultimately takes us to the last important question, which is the overall significance of “Islamic environmentalism” as a historical and social phenomenon and its possible future outlook. As it shall be now apparent, even if interesting in its several localized manifestations, the environmental engagement of Muslims made in the name of Islam and explicitly conditioned by their faith has not, as for now, reached large proportions that would render it a tangible societal force, either in Muslim societies or beyond them. In this regard, it has also undeniably lagged behind expectations and, in many cases, ambitious proclamations made by the enthusiastic representatives of “eco-Islam” and sometimes also by outsiders. Also, this fact has been documented and discussed on several occasions in this work, as in the case of the prevailing “secular” framing of environmental agenda on the part of most Muslim states or the virtual non-existence of a visible Muslim-environmentalist movement in most Muslim societies (see 4.3.4; 5.1.2.c; 5.1.4.d). Some tentative explanations of this fact have been proposed, too (5.2.3.b). Admittedly, this renders the Islamic environmental discourse more of a point of curiosity, a testament to the diversity of contemporary Islam, and proof of the vitality and ongoing relevance of religion



signified by its ability to enter new conjunctions and respond to new human problems. Still, from a different angle, the existence of the Islamic environmental discourse, some basic infrastructures of Islamic environmentalism, and several movements that are already rooted in local contexts make it not improbable that the current situation may change in the future. Especially in the case that global ecological problems and crises escalate and upend the current order of human civilization (as many predict), environmental engagement in the name of Islam may grow and develop into new forms. Hopefully, in such a case, the presented work may serve as one of the sources for studying and evaluating new movements and discourses.

In the meantime, there are certainly many other ways to pursue the study of “Islam and the environment” further and broaden it in different directions, as has been proposed a couple of times. As far as ecological relations are an acknowledged part of social reality and history, there is no meaningful reason to exclude Islam as a religious tradition and historical phenomenon from their study. Also, in this regard, this work has hopefully made a step forward by covering a part of the large historical landscape and providing an insight into how the environment has been approached in the contemporary Islamic discourse in the last 50 years and what tropes and judgments about the past, present and future have been circulated through it.

# References

- Abdel Haleem, Harfiyah, ed. 1998a. *Islam and the Environment*. London: Ta-Ha Publishers, 1998.
- Abdelzaher, D. M., and A. Abdelzaher. 2015. „Beyond environmental regulations: Exploring the potential of ‚eco-Islam’ in boosting environmental ethics within SMEs in Arab markets.“ *Journal of Business Ethics* 145: 1–15.
- Abdelzaher, Dina M., Amr Kotb, and Akrum Helfaya. „Understanding the Whys and Hows of Eco-Islam.“ *Journal of Business Ethics* 155 (2019): 623–643. doi:10.1007/s10551-017-3518-2
- Abdul-Matin, Ibrahim. 2010. *Green Deen: What Islam Teaches about Protecting the Planet*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Adıgüzel, Nuri. 2018. „The Concept of ‚Nature’ in Peripatetic Islamic Philosophy.“ *Dini Tetkikler Dergisi*, July 31. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/517301>
- Afrasiabi, Kaveh L. „Islam and Post-Anthropocentrism.“ In Taylor and Kaplan 2008, 872–873.
- Afrasiabi, Kaveh L. 2008. „Islam and Post-Anthropocentrism.“ In Taylor and Bron 2008, 872–873.
- Africa Vivre. n.d. “Muhammad ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Faqqi: Livres, Biographie, Livres Audio, Bibliographie ...” Accessed May 26, 2024 <https://www.laboutiqueafricavivre.com/s/42381/ec0c865cff5d2fca2944e98d377dac34>
- Achcar, Gilbert. 2008. „Orientalism in Reverse.“ *Radical Philosophy* 151 (September/October). Online. <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/orientalism-in-reverse>
- Akhtaruddin, Ahmad. 1997. *Islam and the Environmental Crisis*. London: Ta-ha Publishers.
- Al-Gain, Abdulbar. 1983. „Preface.“ In Bagader et al. 1994, viii-x.

- Algar, Hamid. 2012. „Hadith in Sufism.“ *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online. Last updated on February 24. Retrieved from: <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/hadith-iv>.
- Ali, E., W. Cramer, J. Carnicer, E. Georgopoulou, N.J.M. Hilmi, G. Le Cozannet, and P. Lionello. 2022. „Cross-Chapter Paper 4: Mediterranean Region.“ In: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, ed. by H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama, 2233–2272. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781009325844.021.
- Ali, Mouhamed Matip Dibong. 2020. *L’islam et l’environnement: Les prophètes et messagers selon le Coran*. Éditions universitaires européennes.
- Almujaddidy, Ali Ilham. 2021. „Progressive Muslim Environmentalism: The Eco-Theology and Ethics of the Nahdliyyin Front For Sovereignty over Natural Resources (FNKSDA).“ In Bagir, Northcott, and Wijisen 2021, 9–31.
- Alwajjiri, Othman Abdulaziz. 2014. *The Islamic World and Milenium Challenges*. ISESCO. [https://www.isesco.org.ma/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/islamic\\_world\\_millennium\\_challenges.pdf](https://www.isesco.org.ma/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/islamic_world_millennium_challenges.pdf)
- Amin, Adnan. 2003. „Preface to Islam and Ecology.“ In Foltz, Denny and Baharuddin 2003, xxxiii—xxxv.
- Ammal, Nawar. 2008. „Islam and Eco-Justice.“ In Taylor and Kaplan 2008, 862–866.
- Ammar, Nawal H. 1995a. „Islam, Population and the Environment: A Textual and Jurstic View.“ In Coward 1995, 123–136.
- Ammar, Nawal. 1995b. „Islam and the Environment.“ Excerpts of an interview. In *Population Growth, Resource Consumption, and the Environment: Seeking a Common Vision for a Troubled World*, ed. by Rick Searle, 33–36. Victoria: University of Victoria.
- Ammar, Nawal. 2001. “Islam and Deep Ecology.” In Barnhill and Gottlieb 2001, 193–211.
- Ammar, Nawal. 2003. „An Islamic Response to the Manifest Ecological Crisis: Issues of Justice.“ In Foltz, Denny, and Baharuddin, 200–217.
- Amri, Ulil. 2019. “Islamic Faith Based Organizations and Eco-Spiritual Governmentality in Indonesia.” In *Southeast Asia and Environmental Sustainability in Context*, ed. by Sunil Kukreja & Amri Ulil, 103–122. Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.

- Anabarja, Sarah, and Ahmad Safril Mubah. 2021. „The Islamic Environmentalism in Eco-Pesantren Initiatives: Integrating the Sustainable Development Values in Islamic Boarding School.“ *Journal of International Studies on Energy Affairs*, 2, no. 1 (January): 75–90.  
<https://doi.org/10.51413/jisea.Vol2.Iss1.2021>
- Anderson, Benedikt. 2006. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Aqil, A. Muh. Ibnu. 2021. „Green Party seeks authorization for 2024 election run.“ *The Jakarta Post*, March 29.  
<https://www.thejakartapost.com/life/2020/06/02/football-pitch-of-rainforest-destroyed-every-six-seconds-study.html>
- ARC (Alliance of Religions and Conservation). 1995. „The Ohito declaration on religions, land and conservation.“ May 3.  
<http://www.arcworld.org/news1cc9.html?pageID=871>
- ARC (Alliance of Religions and Conservation). 2009a. „Historic Istanbul Declaration of the Muslim 7 Year Action Plan on Climate Change.“ July 8. Accessed October 26, 2022. <http://www.arcworld.org/newse9f0.html?pageID=334>
- ARC (Alliance of Religions and Conservation). 2009b. „Muslim Association for Climate Change Action (MACCA) is launched.“ September 16. Accessed October 26, 2022. <http://www.arcworld.org/news4402.html?pageID=347>
- ARC (Alliance of Religions and Conservation). 2009c. „Muslim Association for Climate Change Action to launch internationally in Indonesia in January.“ November 25. Accessed October 26, 2022.  
<http://www.arcworld.org/news6fcb.html?pageID=357>
- ARC (Alliance of Religions and Conservation). 2010. „African leaders pledge eco action.“ February 18. Accessed October 27, 2022.  
<http://www.arcworld.org/news1db6.html?pageID=381>
- ARC (Alliance of Religions and Conservation). 2012. „Christian, Muslim and Hindu faith groups in sub-Saharan Africa launch long-term action plans to protect the environment, 18 September 2012, Nairobi, Kenya.“ September 5. Accessed October 26, 2022.  
[http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/ARC\\_press\\_release\\_Nairobi\\_Celebration\\_2012.pdf](http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/ARC_press_release_Nairobi_Celebration_2012.pdf)
- ARC (Alliance of Religions and Conservation). 2019. „The story of the Indonesian Muslim Conservation Movement.“ May 6. Accessed December 12, 2022. <http://www.arcworld.org/newsd41a.html?pageID=908>

- ARC (Alliance of Religions and Conservation). n.d.a. „Alliance of Religions and Conservation – History.“ Accessed October 7, 2022. <http://www.arcworld.org/about3a59.html?pageID=2>
- ARC (Alliance of Religions and Conservation). n.d.b. „Windsor 2009.“ Accessed October 7, 2022. <http://www.arcworld.org/projects1b48.html?projectID=597>
- Asadi, Bagher, ed. 2005. *Proceedings, International Conference On Environment, Peace and the Dialogue among Civilizations and Cultures*. Teheran: Department of Environment & Environmental Management Support Project.
- Atalay, Figen. 2015. „The History of the Coal Mining Industry and Mining Accidents in the World and Turkey.“ *Turkish Thoracic Journal* 16, suppl. 1 (April): 5–8. <https://doi.org/10.5152/ttd.2015.002>
- Ayalon, Yaron. 2015. *Natural Disasters in the Ottoman Empire: Plague, Famine and Other Misfortunes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ba Kader, Abou Bakr Ahmed, Abdul Latif Tawfik El Shirazi Al Sabbagh, Mohamed Al Sayyed Al Glenid & Mouel Yousef Samarrai Izzidien. 1983. *Basic Paper on the Islamic Principles for the Conservation of the Natural Environment*. Gland: IUCN.
- Backer, Kristiane. 2010. „Glamour and Humility: Tribute to the British Muslim Gai Eaton.“ *Qantara.de*. April 19. <https://en.qantara.de/content/tribute-to-the-british-muslim-gai-eaton-glamour-and-humility>.
- Bacon, Francis. 2003. *The New Organon*. Edited by Lisa Jardine & Michael Silverthorne. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bagader, Abubakr Ahmed, Abdullatif Tawfik El-Chirazi El-Sabbagh, Mohamad As-Sayyid Al-Glayland, Mawil Yousuf Izzi-Deen Samarrai. 1994. *Environmental Protection in Islam*. Second Revised Edition. Gland and Cambridge: IUCN.
- Bagir, Zainal A., and Najiyah Martiam. 2016. „Islam: Norms and practices.“ In Jenkins, Tucker, and Grim, 79–87.
- Bagir, Zainal Abidin, Michael S. Northcott, and Frans Wijsen, eds. 2021. *Varieties of Religion and Ecology*. Zürich: Lit.
- Bagir, Zainal Abidin. 2021. „Introduction: The Varieties of Religion and Ecology.“ In Bagir, Northcott and Wijsen 2021, 1–8.
- Baharuddin, Azizian. 2011. „Guardianship of the Environment: An Islamic Perspective in the Context of Religious Studies, Theology, and Sustainable Development.“ In *Humanity: Texts and Contexts: Christian and Muslim Perspectives*, ed. by Michael Ipgrave and David Marshall, 41–49. Washington: Georgetown University Press.

- Bahu Trust. N.d.a. „About.“ Accessed October 4, 2022. <https://bahustrust.org/about>
- Bahu Trust. N.d.b. „Environment.“ Accessed October 4, 2022. <https://bahustrust.org/environment>
- Bakar, Osman. 2003 “Civilizational Dialogue on Environmental Philosophy: Nasr’s ‘Man and Nature’ Revisited” In *The Beacon of Knowledge: Essay in Honor of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, edited by Mohammad H. Faghfoory. Louisville, Kentucky: Fons Vitae.
- Bakar, Osman. 2017. “Nature as a Sacred Book: A Core Element of Seyyed Hossein Nasr's Philosophical Teachings.” *Sacred Web* 40 (Winter): 75–101.
- Baker, Iljas. 1998. „The Flight of Time, Ecology, and Islam.“ In Abdel Haleem 1998a, 75–89.
- Baker, Iljas. 2003. „Book Review: The Environmental Dimensions of Islam.“ *Environmentalist* 23, (March): 97–98, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022999711394>
- Bakhashab, Omar. A. 1988. „Islamic Law and the Environment: Some Basic Principles.“ *Arab Law Quarterly* 3, no. 3 (January): 287–298.
- Barak, On. 2015. „Outsourcing: Energy and Empire in the Age of Coal, 1820–2011.“ *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 3 (August): 425–445.
- Barnhill, David Landis & Roger S. Gottlieb, eds.. 2001. *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Ground*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Barnes, Jessica. 2014. *Cultivating the Nile: The Everyday Politics of Water in Egypt*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Barnhard, Gavi. 2015. „The Patient Preacher: Yusuf al-Qaradawi's Long Game.“ *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 18 (May), 72–84.
- Barnhill, David Landis & Roger S. Gottlieb, eds. 2001. *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Ground*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001.
- Bauman, Whitney A., Richard R. Bohannon III and Kevin J. O’Brien. 2011b. „The Tensions and Promises of Religion and Ecology’s Past, Present, and Future.“ In Bauman, Bohannon & O’Brien 2011a, 1–17.
- Bauman, Whitney A., Richard R. Bohannon III, and Kevin J. O’Brien, eds. 2011a. *Inherited Land: The Changing Grounds of Religion and Ecology*. Eugene: Pickwick Publications.
- Beck, U., Bonss, W. and Lau, C. 2003. „The Theory of Reflexive Modernization: Problematic, Hypotheses and Research Programme.“ *Theory, Culture & Society* 20, no. 2: 1–33.

- Bělohradský, Václav. 2021. *Čas pléthokracie: když části jsou větší než celky a světový duch spadl z koně*. Praha: 65. Pole.
- Beránek, Ondřej, a Pavel Ťupek. 2008. *Dvojitá tvář islámské charity*. Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury.
- Berger, Peter L. 1999. „The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview.“ In *The Desecularization of the World*, edited by Peter L. Berger, 1–18. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans.
- Beringer, Almut. 2006. “Reclaiming a Sacred Cosmology: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the Perennial Philosophy and Sustainability Education”. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* 11, no. 1: 26–42.
- Berry, Thomas. (1978) 2003. „The New Story.“ In *Teilhard in the 21st. Century: The Emerging Spirit of Earth*, eds. Arthur Fabel and Donald St. John, pp. 77-88. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books. [Originally published in *Teilhard Studies*, no. 1, winter 1978].
- Bhati, Akhtar K., and Gul-e Jannat. 1995. *The Holy Quran on Environment*. Karachi: Royal Book Company.
- Bin Hamza, Mustafa. 2016. *Al-Islam wa al-Bi'a* [Islam and the Environment]. Rabat: Al-Majlis al-'Ilmi al-A'la.
- Bin Laden, Osama. [2002] 2005. „To the Americans“ [transcript of a message originally issued on 6.10.2002]. In *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*, trans. James Howarth, ed. Bruce Lawrence, 160–172. London: Verso.
- Bin Laden, Osama. 2010. „Bin Ladin wa-l-Taghayyurat al-Munakhiyya“ [Bin Laden and Climatic change]. Audio record transcription [non-dated]. *Al-Jazeera*, January 29. Accessed October 2, 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2010/1/29/بن-لادن-والتغيرات-المناخية>
- Bin Laden, Osama. n.d.a. „Letter Implications of Climate Change.“ *Office of the Director of National Intelligence*. Accessed July 22, 2018. <https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ubl/english/Letter%20Implications%20of%20Climate%20Change.pdf>.
- Bin Laden, Osama. n.d.b. „To the kind brother, Shaykh Mahmud.“ *Office of the Director of National Intelligence*. Accessed July 22, 2018. <https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ubl2016/english/To%20the%20kind%20brother,%20Shaykh%20Mahmud.pdf>
- Bin Muhammad, Ghazi, Reza Shah-Kazemi, and Aftab Ahmed. 2010 *The Holy Qur'an and the Environment*. Amman: The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought.
- Bookchin, Murray [under the pseudonym of Lewis Herbert]. 1965. *Crisis in Our Cities*. Hoboken: Prentice-Hall.

- Bookchin, Murray. (1962) 1974. *Our Synthetic Environment*. New York: Harper.
- Bowler Peter J. 1992. *The Fontana History of The Environmental Sciences*. London: Fontana Press.
- Brunn, Stanley D., ed. 2015. *The Changing World Religion Map: Sacred Places, Identities, Practices and Politics*. Berlin: Springer.
- Bsoul, Labeeb, Amani Omer, Lejla Kucukalic, and Ricardo H. Archbold. 2022. „Islam’s Perspective on Environmental Sustainability: A Conceptual Analysis.“ *Social Sciences* 11, no. 228 (May 24): 1–11.
- Bucaille, Maurice. 1995. *The Bible, The Qur'an and Science: The Holy Scriptures Examined in the Light of Modern Knowledge*. Trans. Alastair D. Pannell. Lahore: Islamic Book Service.
- Bureau of Experts (Bureau of Experts at The Council of Ministers of Saudi Arabia). 2021. „Nizam al-Bia [Environmental Law].“ Accessed November 23, 2023. <https://laws.boe.gov.sa/BoeLaws/Laws/LawDetails/63831ff6-63d9-4212-8b54-abf800e146bd/1>
- Burke III, Edmund. 2005. „The Coming Environmental Crisis in the Middle East: A Historical Perspective, 1750-2000 CE.“ Accessed March 3, 2022. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7hn67722>
- Callicot, J. Baird. (1994) 1997. *Earth’s Insights: A Multicultural Survey of Ecological Ethics from the Mediterranean Basin to the Australian Outback*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Carson, Rachel. (1962) 2002. *Silent Spring*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- CCM (Cambridge Central Mosque). N.d. „Environment.“ Accessed October 4, 2022. <https://cambridgecentralmosque.org/environment/>.
- Coakley, John. 2018. „‘Primordialism’ in Nationalism Studies: Theory of Ideology.“ *Nations and Nationalism* 24, no. 2 (April): 327–347.
- Cohen, Daniel Aldana. 2021. „Toward an environmental turn in historical sociology (speaking notes).“ August 9. Retrieved from <https://aldanacohen.com/2021/08/12/toward-an-environmental-turn-in-historical-sociology-speaking-notes/>
- Colwell, Mary, Victoria Finlay, Alison Hillard and Susie Weldon, eds. 2009. *Many Heavens, One Earth*. Bath: Alliance of Religions and Conservation.
- Commoner, Barry. 1972. *The Closing Circle: Nature, Man and Technology*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Commoner, Barry. 1975. „How Poverty Breeds Overpopulation (and not the other way around).“ *Ramparts*, August/September, 21–25, 58–59.



- Conis, Elena. 2017. „Beyond Silent Spring: An Alternate History of DDT.“ *Distillations Magazine*, February 14.  
<https://sciencehistory.org/stories/magazine/beyond-silent-spring-an-alternate-history-of-ddt/>
- Coward, Harold, ed. 1995. *Population, Consumption, and the Environment: Religious and Secular Responses*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Cowie, Robert H., Philippe Bouchet & Benoît Fontaine. 2022. „The Sixth Mass Extinction: fact, fiction or speculation?“ *Biological Reviews* 97, no. 2 (April): 640–663.
- Crosby, Alfred. 1972. *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*. Santa Barbara: Greenwood.
- CW (A Common World). 2010. „The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought Environment Symposium.“ A Website run by Royal Aal Al Bayt Institute, Jordan. Accessed October 27, 2022.  
<https://www.acommonword.com/introduction-to-a-common-word-between-us-and-you/>
- CW (A Common World). n.d.a. „Introduction to A Common Word Between Us and You.“ A Website run by Royal Aal Al Bayt Institute, Jordan. Accessed October 27, 2022. <https://www.acommonword.com/introduction-to-a-common-word-between-us-and-you/>
- Damkhi, Ali Mohamed al-. 2008. „Environmental ethics in Islam: principles, violations and future perspectives.“ *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 65, no. 1: 11–31.
- Davis, Diana K., and Edmund Burke III., eds. 2011. *Environmental Imageries of the Middle East and North Africa*. Athens, Oh: Ohio University Press.
- Davis, Diana. 2007. *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome: Environmental History and French Colonial Expansion in North Africa*. Athens, Oh.: Ohio University Press.
- Deboulet, Agnes & Waleed Mansour, ed. 2022. *Middle Eastern Cities in a Time of Climate Crisis*. Cairo: CEDEJ.
- DeLanda, Manuel. 2006. *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory And Social Complexity*. New York: Continuum.
- DeLanda, Manuel. 2016. *Assemblage Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburg University Press.
- Deleuze Gilles & Felix Guattari. 1987. *Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Pres.

- Derr, Jennifer. 2019. *The Lived Nile: Environment, Disease, and Material Colonial Economy in Egypt*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Descartes, René. 1998. *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*. Fourth Edition. Trans. Donald A. Cress. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Dewayanti, Adinda, and Norshahril Saat. 2020. „Islamic Organizations and Environmentalism in Indonesia.“ *ISEAS Perspective* 117 (October 15): 1–9. [https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ISEAS\\_Perspective\\_2020\\_117.pdf](https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ISEAS_Perspective_2020_117.pdf)
- Dizard, Wilson. 2015. „Islamic scholars call on faithful to help fight climate change.“ *Al-Jazeera America*, August 18. <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/8/18/islamic-scholars-issue-climate-change-declaration.html>
- Dokrat, Hashim Ismail. 2003. „Islam, Muslim Society, and Environmental Concerns: A Development Model Based on Islam's Organic Society“ in Foltz, Denny, and Baharduddin, 341–367.
- Douglas, Mary. 1986. *How Institutions Think*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- DRA (Directorate of Religious Affairs, Turkey). n.d.a. *İslam ve Çevre [Islam and the Environment]*. Ankara. <https://diniyayinlar.diyamet.gov.tr/Documents/Islam-ve-Cevre-Turkce.pdf>
- DRA (Directorate of Religious Affairs, Turkey). n.d.b. „Yabancı Dillerde Broşürler [Brochures in Foreign Languages].“ <https://diniyayinlar.diyamet.gov.tr/sayfa/542>
- Duderija, Adis. 2014. „Contemporary Muslim Reformist Thought and Maqāṣid cum Maṣlaḥa Approaches to Islamic Law: An Introduction“ In *Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘a and Contemporary Reformist Muslim Thought: An Examination*, ed. by Adis Duderija, 1–12. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Durkheim, Emile. 1995. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Trans. by Karen E. Fields. New York: The Free Press.
- Dutton, Yasin. 1992. „Islam and Natural Resources.“ In Khalid and O’Brien 1992, 51–67.
- Dutton, Yasin. 1998. „Islam and the Environment: a Framework for Enquiry.“ In Abdel Haleem 1998a, 56–74.
- Dutton, Yasin. 2003. „The Environmental Crisis of Our Time: A Muslim Response.“ In Foltz, Denny, and Baharuddin 2003, 323–337.
- Dutton, Yasin. 2011. „The politics of usury or the politics of zakāt? Reflections on the future of Islam in Britain.“ *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture* 13, n.o. 2-3 (October 1): 226–241.

- Dutton, Yasin. 2022. „The Environmental Crisis of Our Time and the Ethics of Stewardship: A Muslim Response.“ In Sherma and Bilimoria, 107–117.
- Eaton, Gai. 2006. „The Earth’s Complaint.“ In *The Essential Sophia*, ed. by Seyyed Hossein Nasr & Kathrine O’Brian, 233–243. Bloomington: World Wisdom.
- Eaton, Charles Le Gai. 1998. „Islam and the Environment.“ In Abdel Haleem 1998a, 43–54.
- Ehrlich, Paul R. 1968. *The Population Bomb*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Eisenstadt, Smuhel N. 2000. „Multiple Modernities.“ *Daedalus* 129, no. 1: 1–29.
- Elshakry, Marw. 2013. *Reading Darwin in Arabic, 1860-1950*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- EMDC (Earth-Mates Dialogue Centre). 2009a. „The Muslim 7 Year Action Plan (M7YAP) To Deal with Global Climate Change.“ Prepared by the Earth-Mates Dialogue Center, London, UK, with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC). Accessed October 26, 2022. <https://incrworld.org/assets/downloads/Muslim-7YP.pdf>
- EMDC (Earth-Mates Dialogue Centre). 2009b. „Istanbul Declaration of The Muslim 7-Year-Action Plan on Climate Change 2010-2017.“ Accessed on October 26, 2022. <http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/m7yap%20dec%20july%2009.pdf>
- Enayat, Hamid. *Modern Islamic Political Thought*. London: I.B. Tauris 2001.
- Engels, Frederick. [1847] 1925. *Principles of Communism*. Trans. Max Bedacht. Chicago: The Daily Worker Publishing. Available at: [https://archive.org/details/ilovepdf\\_merged1\\_202003/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/ilovepdf_merged1_202003/mode/2up)
- EPL (Environmental Policy and Law). 2001. „The Environment from an Islamic Perspective.“ *Environmental Policy and Law* 31, no. 3: 162–162. <https://ip.ios.semcs.net/download/environmental-policy-and-law/epl31-3-14?id=environmental-policy-and-law%2Fepl31-3-14>
- Fahimi, ‘Azizollah. 1396/2017. *Mas’uliyat-e Madani-ye Nashi az Takhrib-e Mohit-e Zist dar Feqh va Hoquq-e Iran* [Civil Responsibility Ensuing from Harming the Environment in Islamic Jurisprudence and Iranian Law]. Qom: Pazhuheshgah-e ‘Olum va Farhang-e Eslami Vabaste be Tablighat-e Eslami-ye Havze-ye ‘Elmiyye-ye Qumm, 1396.
- Faqqi, ‘Abd al-Qadir al-. 1993. *Al-Bi’a: Mashakiluha wa-Qadayaha wa-Himayatuha min al-Talawwuth, Ru’ya Islamiyya* [The Environment: Its Problems, Questions and Its Protection from the Pollution, the Islamic View]. Cairo: Dar al-Nasr li-t-Tiba’ al-Islamiyya.

- Feyerabend, Paul. 1993. *Against Method*. London: Verso.
- Feyerabend, Paul. 2016. *Philosophy of Nature*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Fikri, Ibnu, and Freek Colombijn. 2021. „Is Green Islam going to support environmentalism in Indonesia?“ *Anthropology Today* 37, no. 2: 15–18.
- Finnegan, Eleanor. 2011. „What Traditions Are Represented in Religion and Ecology: A Perspective from an American Scholar of Islam.“ In Bauman, Bohannon and O’Brian 2011a, 64–79.
- Firouz, Eskandar & Daniel Balland. 2011. „Environmental Protection.“ In *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online.  
<https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/environmental-protection>
- FOEI (Friend of the Earth International). n.d. „Indonesia.“  
<https://www.foei.org/member-groups/indonesia/>
- Foltz, Richard C, ed. 2005a. *Environmentalism in the Muslim World*. New York: Nova Science Publishers.
- Foltz, Richard C. 2003a. „Introduction.“ In Foltz, Denny and Baharduddin 2003, xxxvii—xlii.
- Foltz, Richard C. 2003b. „Islamic Environmentalism: A Matter of Interpretation.“ In Foltz, Denny and Baharduddin 2003, 249–279.
- Foltz, Richard C. 2005b. „Introduction: The Environmental Crisis in the Muslim World.“ In Foltz 2005a, vii—xiii.
- Foltz, Richard C. 2005c. „Iran.“ In In Foltz 2005a, 3–16.
- Foltz, Richard C. 2006. *Animals in Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures*. Oxford: Oneworld.
- Foltz, Richard C. 2008a. „Izzi Dien, Mawil Y.“ In Taylor and Kaplan 2008, 890–891.
- Foltz, Richard C. 2008a. „Izzi Dien, Mawil Y.“ In Taylor and Kaplan 2008, 890–891.
- Foltz, Richard C. 2008b. „Islam.“ In Taylor and Kaplan 2008, 858–862.
- Foltz, Richard C. 2020. „Muslim Environmentalisms: Religious and Social Foundations. By Anna M. Gade.“ *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 88, no. 1 (March): 296–298. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfz086>
- Foltz, Richard C., Frederick M. Denny & Azizan Baharuddin, eds. 2003. *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Fortuny, Kim. 2021. *Animals and the Environment in Turkish Culture: Ecocriticism and Transnational Literature*. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Foucault Michel. [1969] 2002b. *Archeology of Knowledge*. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. London: Routledge.

- Foucault, Michel. [1966] 2002a. *The Order of Things: An archeology of human sciences*. London: Routledge.
- Foucault, Michel. 1991. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Allan Sheridan. London: Penguin.
- Foucault, Michel. 2008. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79*. Edited by Michel Senellart, translated by Graham Burchell. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Frodeman, Robert, and J. Baird Callicot. 2009. „Introduction.“ In *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*, ed. by J. Baird Callicot and Robert Froderman, XV—XXV. Farmington Hills: Gale.
- Fuseini, Awal, and John Lever. 2021. „Sustainable livestock agriculture from Islamic perspective.“ *CABI Reviews* (June 1). doi:10.1079/PAVSNNR202116026
- Gade, Anna M. 2021. „Zamzam Water: Environmentality and Decolonizing Material Islam.“ In *Islam Through Objects*, edited by Anna Bieglow, 196–209. London: Bloomsbury.
- Gade, Anna. 2012. „Tradition and Sentiment in Indonesian Environmental Islam.“ *Worldviews* 16, no. 3: 263–285.
- Gade, Anna. 2015. „Islamic Law and the Environment in Indonesia.“ *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology* 19, no. 2: 161–183.
- Gade, Anna. 2019. *Muslim Environmentalisms: Religious and Social Foundations*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Gain, Abdulbar al-. 1983. „Preface.“ In Ba Kader et al. 1983, 9–10.
- Gardner, Gary. 2006. *Inspiring progress: Religions' contributions to sustainable development*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Gellner, Ernst. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Genov, Nikolai. 2019. „Multi-paradigmatic sociology: debates present and perennial.“ *Zhurnal sotsiologii i sotsialnoy antropologii* [The Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology], 22, no. 1 (November): 24–46. <https://doi.org/10.31119/jssa.2019.22.1.2>
- GKM (Green Knight Multimedia). N.d. „About Green Knight Multimedia.“ Accessed November 1, 2022. <https://thegreenknight.org/about/>
- Glacken C. 1967. *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: nature and culture in western thought from ancient times to the end of the eighteenth century*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Go, Julian & George Lawson. 2017. „Introduction: For a Global Historical Sociology.“ In *Global Historical Sociology*, ed. by Julian Go & George Lawson, 1–34. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Goldman, Ari L. 1990. „Religions and Environment: Focus on a Worldly Concern.“ *The New York Times*, September 17. Archived at <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/09/17/us/religions-and-environment-focus-on-a-worldly-concern.html>
- Goodman, Pericval & Paul Goodman. 1960. *Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Goodreads. 2023. “Muhammad ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Faqqi” [in Arabic]. Accessed February 2, 2023. <https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/4195641>
- Gottlieb, Robert. 2005. *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*. Revised and Updated Edition. Washington: Island Press.
- Gottlieb, Roger S. 2006a. *A Greener Faith: Religious Environmentalism and Our Planet’s Future*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gottlieb, Roger S. 2006b. *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gottlieb, Roger S., ed. 2004. *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Gratien, Chris. 2022. *The Unsettled Plain: An Environmental History of the Late Ottoman Frontier*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Grim, John & Mary Evelyn Tucker. 2010. „Thomas Berry: Reflections on His Life and Thought“ *Teilhard Studies* no. 61: 1–26.
- Grossman, Kristina. 2019. „‘Green Islam’: Islamic environmentalism in Indonesia: Between socio-ecological projects and a toothless tiger.“ *New Mandala*, August 28. <https://www.newmandala.org/green-islam/>
- Guarasci, Bridget. 2015. “The National Park: Reviving Eden in Iraq’s Marshes.” *Arab Studies Journal* 13: 128–53.
- Gum‘a, ‘Ali. 2011. „Al-Islam wa al-Bi‘a [Islam and the Environment].“ *Kalimat al-Haqq* [The Word of Truth], Egyptian TV Channel 1. Accessed July 19, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYku-WtosOw>
- Haider, Gulzar. 1984. „Habitat and Values in Islam: a conceptual formulation of an Islamic city.“ In *The Touch of Midas: Science, values and environment in Islam and the West*. In Sardar 1984a, 179–208.
- Haider, Najam. 2011. *The Origins of the Shī‘a: Identity, Ritual, and Sacred Space in Eighth-Century Kūfa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ḥajjāb, Munir Muhammad. 2002. *Al-Talawwuth wa-Himayat al-Bi‘a: Qadaya al-Bi‘a min Manzur Islami* [The Pollution and the Protection of Environment: Questions of Environment from the Islamic Perspective]. Cairo: Dar al-Fajr li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi‘.

- Halevi, Leor. 2021. *Modern Things on Trial Islam's Global and Material Reformation in the Age of Rida, 1865–1935*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hamed, Safei-Eldin A. 2005. „Egypt.“ In Foltz 2005a, 37–54.
- Hämeen-Antilla, Jaakko. 2017. „Paradise and Nature in the Quran and Pre-Islamic Poetry.“ In *Roads to Paradise: Eschatology and Concepts of the Hereafter in Islam (2 vols.)*, edited by Sebastian Günther & Todd Lawson, 136–161. Leiden: Brill.
- Hancock, Rosemary. 2018. *Islamic Environmentalism: Activism In United States and Britain*. London: Routledge.
- Haq, Syed Nomanul. 2001. "Islam and Ecology: Toward Retrieval and Reconstruction." *Daedalus* 130, no. 4: 141–178.
- Haq, Zeenat, Muhammad Imran, Shabbir Ahmad, and Umer Farooq. 2020. „Environment, Islam, and women: a study of eco-feminist environmental activism in Pakistan.“ *Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education* 23: 275–291.
- Hardin, Garrett. 1968. "The Tragedy of the Commons." *Science*, no. 162: 1243–1248.
- Hargrove, Eugene, ed. 1986. *Religion and Environmental Crisis*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.
- Harman, Graham. 2014. „Undermining, Overmining and Duomining: A Critique.“ In *Add Metaphysics*, ed. by Jenna Sutela, 40–51. Espoo: Aalto University.
- Hart, John, ed. 2017. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology*. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.
- Hartman, Laura M., ed. 2018. *That All May Flourish. Comparative Religious Environmental Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hassan, Salah D. 2020. „Islam, Environmental Science, and Conservation.“ *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies* 5, no. 2 (November): 129–134.
- Heern, Zackary M. 2015. *The Emergence of Modern Shi'ism. Islamic Reform in Iran and Iraq*. London: Oneworld.
- Herdiansyah, Herdis, Trisasono Jokopitoyo, and Ahmad Munir. 2016. „Environmental Awareness to Realizing Green Islamic Boarding School (Eco-Pesantren) In Indonesia.“ *IOP Conf. Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 30. <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1755-1315/30/1/012017/pdf>
- Hermanto, Agus & Yuhani'ah dan Rohmi. 2023. *Islam dan Lingkungan Hidup [Islam and the Environment]*. Kota Malang: Literasi Nusantra.

- Heuer, Brigitte, Barbara Kellner-Heinkele & Klaus Schönig (eds.) 2016. „*Die Wunder der Schöpfung. Mensch und Natur in der türkischsprachigen Welt.*“ Würzburg: Ergon Verlag.
- Hijau ([The Green Party of Indonesia]). 2023. *Platform Hijau*. August 27. [https://www.hijau.org/docs/PLATFORM\\_HIJAU\\_20230827.pdf](https://www.hijau.org/docs/PLATFORM_HIJAU_20230827.pdf)
- Hizb al-Tahrir. 2009. *Mushkilat al-Bi'a. Asbabuha wa Kayfiyat Mu'alajatiha fi Nazar al-Islam* [The Problem of the Environment. Its Causes and Ways of its Treatment from the Islamic Viewpoint]. Accessed July 20, 2018. <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.info/ar/index.php/resources/hizb-resources/57302.html>
- Hobson, Ismail. 1998. „Principles into Practice: Islamic Tradition.“ In Abdel Haleem 1998a., 90–102.
- Hodgson, Marshall G. S. 1974. *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization. I. The Classical Age of Islam*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Holdgate, Martin W. 1999. *The Green Web: A Union for World Conservation*. London: Earthscan.
- Hošek, Jan. 2020. „Geologie lidstva?“ In *Antropocén*, ed. Petr Pokorný a David Storch, 220–250. Praha: Academia.
- Hughes, Donald J. 2005. *The Mediterranean: An Environmental History*. Santa Barbara: ABC Clio.
- Hughes, J. Donald. 2016. *What is Environmental History? 2nd edition*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Husain, Faisal. 2021. *Rivers of the Sultan: The Tigris and Euphrates in the Ottoman Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Husaini, Ahmed Waqar. 1980. *Islamic Environmental Systems Engineering*. London: Macmillan.
- Hussein, Noor al-. 2015. „Islam, Faith, and Climate Change.“ *Project Syndicate*, September 22. Accessed October 27, 2022. <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/islam-faith-climate-change-by-noor-al-hussein-2015-09>
- Chaplin, Jonathan. 2016. „The Global Greening of Religion.“ *Palgrave Communications*, vol. 2 (July), online. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2016.47>
- Chernilo, Daniel. 2006. „Social Theory's Methodological Nationalism.“ *European Journal of Social Theory* 9/1: 5–22.
- Chishti, Saadia Khawar Khan. 2003. „Fiṭra: An Islamic Model for Humans and the Environment.“ In Foltz, Denny, and Baharuddin 2003, 67–82.



- Chittick, William C. 2007. „Introduction“. In *The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, edited by William C. Chittick, ix–xiv. Bloomington: World Wisdom.
- Chowdhury, Mohammed Ghayas. 2013. „Understanding British Muslim Environmentalism Using Qualitative Research Techniques and Issue Crawler Mapping Software.“ *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 9: 1–21. <http://www.religjournal.com/pdf/ijrr09006.pdf>
- Christiensen, Peter. 1993. *The Decline of Iranshahr: Irrigation and Environments in the History of the Middle East, 500 B.C. to A.D. 1500*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press.
- IC (The Islamic College). N.d. „The Quran and the Spiritual Roots of the Environmental Crisis.“ An invitation to lecture by R. Shah-Kazemi, May 27, 2022. Accessed November 1, 2022. <https://www.islamic-college.ac.uk/2022/05/monthly-lecture-series/>
- Idllalène, Samira. 2021. *Rediscovery and Revival in Islamic Environmental Law: Back to the Future of Nature's Trust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- IEA. n.d.a. „Special Message by Leader of Islamic Emirate regarding Tree Plantation.“ *Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan*. Accessed July 22, 2018. <http://alemarah-english.com/new/?p=11040>.
- IEA. N.d.b. „Areas planted with trees as per directive from Amir-ul-Momineen.“ *Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan*. Accessed July 23, 2018. <http://alemarah-english.com/new/?p=12183>.
- IFEES (Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences). 2015. *Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change*. Accessed July 18, 2018. [http://www.ifees.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/climate\\_declarationmMWB.pdf](http://www.ifees.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/climate_declarationmMWB.pdf)
- IFEES. 2017. „We support the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.“ June 5th. <https://www.ifees.org.uk/news-posts/we-support-the-paris-agreement-on-climate-change/>
- IFEES. N.d.b. „Declaration Drafting Team.“ Accessed July 18, 2018. <https://www.ifees.org.uk/about/islamic-declaration-on-global-climate-change/declaration-drafting-team/#about>.
- IFEES. N.d.c. „Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change.“ A shortened poster version. Accessed October 5 2022. [https://www.ifees.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/english\\_\\_final.pdf](https://www.ifees.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/english__final.pdf)
- IFEES. N.d.e. „Projects.“ Accessed May 26, 2024. <https://www.ifees.org.uk/projects/>
- IFEES. N.d.f. „Trustees.“ Accessed May 26, 2024. <https://www.ifees.org.uk/about/trustees/>

- IFEES. N.d.g. „Publications.“ Accessed May 26, 2024.  
<https://www.ifees.org.uk/resources/publications/>
- IFEES. n.d.h. “The founder.“ Accessed May 26, 2024.  
<https://www.ifees.org.uk/about/the-founder/>
- IISD (International Institute for Sustainable Development). 2005. „A summary report of the International Conference on Environment, Peace, and the Dialogue among Civilizations and Cultures.“ *Dialogue Among Civilizations Bulletin* 108, no. 1 (May 13). Accessed November 10, 2022. [https://s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/enb.iisd.org/archive/download/pdf/sd/ymbvol108num1e.pdf?X-Amz-Content-Sha256=UNSIGNED-PAYLOAD&X-Amz-Algorithm=AWS4-HMAC-SHA256&X-Amz-Credential=AKIA6QW3YWTJ6YORWEEL%2F20221110%2Fus-west-2%2Fs3%2Faws4\\_request&X-Amz-Date=20221110T092046Z&X-Amz-SignedHeaders=host&X-Amz-Expires=60&X-Amz-Signature=74dbbbc74f472c7285fa63251d75dd8b8f9afd3462893927ee482d6cc570c6c1](https://s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/enb.iisd.org/archive/download/pdf/sd/ymbvol108num1e.pdf?X-Amz-Content-Sha256=UNSIGNED-PAYLOAD&X-Amz-Algorithm=AWS4-HMAC-SHA256&X-Amz-Credential=AKIA6QW3YWTJ6YORWEEL%2F20221110%2Fus-west-2%2Fs3%2Faws4_request&X-Amz-Date=20221110T092046Z&X-Amz-SignedHeaders=host&X-Amz-Expires=60&X-Amz-Signature=74dbbbc74f472c7285fa63251d75dd8b8f9afd3462893927ee482d6cc570c6c1)
- İnal, Onur, and Yavuz Köse, eds. 2019. *Seeds of Power: Explorations in Ottoman Environmental History*. Winwick, Cambridgeshire: The White Horse Press.
- Iqbal, Muzaffar. 2009. *The Making of Islamic Science*. London: I.B.Tauris.
- IQRA. n.d. „Muaz Nasir.“ Posts overview. Accessed October 4, 2022.  
<https://www.iqra.ca/tag/muaz-nasir/>
- IRW (Islamic Relief Worldwide). N.d. „Climate Change.“ <https://www.islamic-relief.org/climatechange>.
- Isa, Hana Fahmi Ahmad. 2018. „Himayat al-Shari‘a al-Islamiyya li-l-Bi‘a al-Tabi‘iyya“ [Islamic Shari‘a’s Protection of the Natural Environment] *Journal of the Faculty of Sharia and Law in Tanta* 33, no. 1: 144–397.  
[https://mksq.journals.ekb.eg/article\\_18602\\_9f73edc79c9d875fa2c17d86a4373eb8.pdf](https://mksq.journals.ekb.eg/article_18602_9f73edc79c9d875fa2c17d86a4373eb8.pdf)
- ISCC (Interfaith Summit on Climate Change). 2014. „Climate, Faith and Hope: Faith traditions together for a common future.“ Interfaith Summit on Climate Change, September 21, 2014. <https://interfaithclimate.org/the-statement>
- ISESCO. 2002a. *Islamic World and the Sustainable Development, Specificities, Challenges and Commitments*. Rabat.
- ISESCO. 2002b. „Islamic Declaration on Sustainable Development.“ The First Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers, Jeddah, June 10–12, 2002.  
<https://www.isesco.org.ma/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Islamic-Declaration-for-Sustainable-Development.pdf>

- ISESCO. 2006. „Jeddah Commitments for Sustainable Development.“ Second Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers, Jeddah, December 13–15, 2006. <https://www.isesco.org.ma/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Jeddah-Commitments-for-Sustainable-Development.pdf>.
- ISESCO. 2010. „Tunis Declaration on Enhancing the Efforts of the Islamic World towards Environment Protection and Sustainable Development.“ Fourth Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers, Tunis, October 5–6, 2010. [http://www.sesric.org/imgs/news/image/icme\\_Tunis%20Declaration%202010.pdf](http://www.sesric.org/imgs/news/image/icme_Tunis%20Declaration%202010.pdf)
- ISESCO. 2012. „Islamic Declaration on Sustainable Development (whithin the Framework of the Islamic World’s Participation in the Rio+20 Summit).“ Fifth Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers, Astana May 17–18, 2012. [https://www.isesco.org.ma/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/5env-decla\\_en.pdf](https://www.isesco.org.ma/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/5env-decla_en.pdf)
- ISESCO. 2015. “Islamic Declaration on Environment Protection and Sustainable Development.” Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers, Rabat, September 8–9, 2015. <https://www.isesco.org.ma/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/3-4-VE-env6.pdf>
- ISESCO. 2017. „Rabat Declaration, Islamic Declaration on Environment Protection and Achieving Sustainable Development Goals.“ Seventh Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers. Rabat, October 25, 2017. <https://www.isesco.org.ma/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/declaration-7icem.pdf>
- ISESCO. 2019. Rabat Declaration on The Promotion of Cultural and Religious Roles in the Protection of the Environment and Achieving Sustainable Development. Rabat, October 2–3. <https://icesco.org/en/the-8th-islamic-conference-of-environment-ministers/>
- Islam, Muhammad Muinul. 2004. „Towards a Green Earth: An Islamic Perspective.“ *Asian Affairs* 26, no. 4 (October-December): 44–89.
- Izutsu, Toshihiko. 2002. *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur’ān*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Izzi Deen, Mawil Y. 2004. „Islamic Environmental Ethics, Law and Society.“ In Gottlieb 2004, 142–150.
- Izzi Dien, M. 1997. “Islam and the Environment: Theory and Practice.” *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 18, no. 1: 47–57.
- Izzi Dien, Mawil Y. 1984. „Islamic Theology and the Environment.“ *Journal of the Faculty of Arts* (King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah) 4: 35–43.
- Izzi Dien, Mawil Y. 1990. “Islamic Environmental Ethics, Law, and Society.” In *Ethics of Environment and Development: Global Challenge and*

- International Response*, ed. by J. Ronald Engel and Joan Gibb Engel, 189–98. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Izzi Dien, Mawil Y. 1992. „Islamic Ethics and the Environment.“ In Khalid and O’Brien 1992, 25–35.
- Izzi Dien, Mawil Y. 2000. *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam*. Cambridge: Luteworth.
- Jadaliyya. n.d. „Environment.“ List of Articles. *Jadaliyya*. Accessed October 5, 2022. <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Category/204>
- Jakes, Aaron G. 2020. *Egypt's Occupation: Colonial Economism and the Crises of Capitalism*. Stanford. Stanford University Press.
- Jarrar, Maher. 2006. „Heaven and Sky.“ In *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān Vol. 2*, ed. by Janne Dammen McAuliffe, 410–412. Leiden: Brill.
- Javadi-Amoli, ‘Abdallah. 1386/2016. *Eslam va Mohit-e Zist* [Islam and the Environment]. Qom: Esra’.
- Jayyousi, Odeh al-. 2015. „Rethinking Degrowth: Islamic Perspectives.“ *Degrowth*, August 26, 2015. <https://www.degrowth.info/blog/rethinking-degrowth-islamic-perspectives>
- Jayyousi, Odeh Rashid al-. 2012. *Islam and Sustainable Development: New Worldviews*. Farnham: Gower Publishing Limited.
- Jenkins, Willis, Mary Evelyn Tucker, and John Grim, ed. 2016. *Routledge handbook of religion and ecology*. London: Routledge.
- Jensen, Tim. 2008a. „Network on Conservation and Religion.“ In Taylor and Kaplan 2008, 1193.
- Jensen, Tim. 2008b. „Palmer, Martin.“ In Taylor and Kaplan 2008, 1257.
- Jones, Toby Craigh. 2010. *Desert Kingdom: How Oil and Water Forged Modern Saudi Arabia*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Jones, Toby Craigh. 2010. *Desert Kingdom: How Oil and Water Forged Modern Saudi Arabia*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Jones, Toby C. 2013. „State of Nature: The Politics of Water in the Making of Saudi Arabia.“ In Mikhail 2013a, 231–250.
- Kakish, Kamal. 2016. *Facilitating a Hima Resurgence: Understanding the Links between Land Governance and Tenure Security*. Amman: The West Asia – North Africa (WANA) Institute.
- Kalyani, Sari Zayd al-. 2014. „Tadabir Ri’ayat al-Bi’a fi al-Shari’a al-Islamiyya“ [Tenets for the Environmental Care in the Islamic Shari’a]. *Dirasat ‘Ulum al-Shari’a wa-l-Qanun* 41, no. 2 (2014), 1209–1228.

- Kamaly, Hossein. 2018. *God and Man in Tehran: Contending Visions of the Divine from the Qajars to the Islamic Republic*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kaminski, Joseph J. 2018. „The OIC and the Paris 2015 Climate Change Agreement: Islam and the Environment.“ In *Global Governance and Muslim Organizations*, edited by L. Pal & M. Tok, 171–195. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Karagiannis, Emanuel. 2023. *Why Islamists Go Green*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Karagiannis, Emmanuel. 2015. „When the green gets greener: political Islam’s newly-found environmentalism.“ *Small wars & insurgencies* 26, no. 1: 181–201.
- Karimi, Ahmad Milad. 2022. *Welt – Umwelt – Mitwelt. Falsafa. Jahrbuch für islamische Religionsphilosophie, vol. 4*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft.
- Kepel, Gilles. 2002. *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*. Trans. Anthony F. Roberts. Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press.
- Keskin, Z., and M. Ozalp. 2020. „An Islamic Approach to Environmental Protection and Ecologically Sustainable Peace in the Age of the Anthropocene.“ In: Camilleri, J., Guess, D., *Towards a Just and Ecologically Sustainable Peace*, 119–134. Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore.
- Khaleafa. 2022. „Muslims Across the World to Celebrate Earth Day with the Green Khutbah Campaign.“ April 18.  
<http://www.khaleafa.com/khaleafacom/muslims-across-the-world-to-celebrate-earth-day-with-green-khutbah-campaign-2>
- Khalid, Fazlun & Ali Kh. Thani. n.d. „The application of Islamic environmental ethics to promote marine conservation in Zanzibar.“ IFEES. Accessed October 9, 2022.  
<https://www.ifees.org.uk/projects/islam-biodiversity/zanzibar/>
- Khalid, Fazlun M. & Thani, Ali Kh. 2007. *Teachers Guide Book for Islamic Environmental Education*. IFEES.  
[https://ifees.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/teachers\\_guide\\_book\\_english.pdf](https://ifees.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/teachers_guide_book_english.pdf)
- Khalid, Fazlun M. 1999. *Qur’an, Creation & Conservation: An Introduction to the Ethical Foundations of Islamic Environmentalism*. IFEES. Available at:  
<https://ifees.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/quran-creation-and-conservation-.pdf>
- Khalid, Fazlun M. 2008b. „Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences.“ In Taylor and Kaplan 2008, 884.

- Khalid, Fazlun, and Joanne O'Brien, eds. 1992. *Islam and Ecology*. London: Cassell.
- Khalid, Fazlun. 1992. „The Disconnected People.“ In Khalid and O'Brien 1992, 99–111.
- Khalid, Fazlun. 2007. „'Rampant' society upsets natural order.“ *BBC*, February 8. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/6343447.stm>
- Khalid, Fazlun. 2017. “Exploring Environmental Ethics in Islam: Insights from the Quran and the Practices of Prophet Muhammad.” In Hart 2017, 130-145.
- Khalid, Fazlun. 2019. *Signs on the Earth: Islam, Modernity and the Climate Crisis*. Markfield: Kube.
- Khalili, Ahmad bin Hamad al-. 2010. „Al-Qiyam al-Islamiyya wa-Dawruha fi Taqdimi Hulul l-l-Mushkilat al-Bī'a al-‘Alamiyya“ [Islamic Values and their Role in Proposing Solutions to the Global Environmental Problems]. Fifteenth General Conference of the Royal House Institute on the Islamic Thinking. September 27–29, Amman, Jordan.
- Khalili, Ahmad bin Hamad al-. 2010. „Al-Qawa'id al-Shar'iyah wa-Himayat al-Bi'a [The Rules of the Sharī'a and the Conservation of the Environment].“ *Nadwat Tatawwur al-‘Ulum al-Fiqhiyya fi ‘Umman, al-Fiqh al-Hadari, al-Fiqh al-‘Umrani*. Available at *Taddart, Markaz al-Dirasat al-‘Ibadiyya*, <http://www.taddart.org/?p=12037>.
- Khan, Naveeda. 2014. „Dogs and Humans and What Earth Can Be: Filaments of Muslim Ecological Thought.“ *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4, no. 3: 245–264. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14318/hau4.3.015>
- Khermimoun, Jamel. 2018. *L'environnement et l'islam*. Paris: Albouraq éditions.
- Khuri, Sana al-. 2021. „Climatic Change: Imam of al-Azhar, Ahmad Tayyib Sounds the Alarm.“ *BBC News Arabic*, July 29. <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast-57986772>
- Kinsley, David. 1995. *Ecology and Religion: Ecological Spirituality in a Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
- Klaus, Václav. 2008. *Blue Planet in Green Shackles*. Washington, DC: Competitive Enterprise Institute.
- Klaus, Václav. 2010. *Kawkabuna al-Azraq fi Quyud Chadra* [Blue Planet in Green Shackles]. Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq.
- Klinken, Gerry van & Yogi Setia Permana. 2022. „Utopians for parliament.“ *Inside Indonesia*, April 16. <https://www.insideindonesia.org/editions/edition-148-apr-jun-2022/utopians-for-parliament>
- Koehrsen, Jens. 2021. „Muslims and Climate Change: How Islam, Muslim organizations, and religious leaders influence climate change perceptions

- and mitigation activities.“ *WIREs Climate Change* 12, no. 3.  
<https://wires.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/wcc.702>
- Koestler, A. 1964. *The Sleepwalkers: a history of man's changing vision of the universe*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Kolářek, Jakub. 2018. Islám a životní prostředí: Ekologická témata očima současných islámských právníků a filosofů. Graduate Thesis, Charles University.
- Konopásek, Zdeněk. 2020. „Antropocén: Více než jeden, méně než dva.“ In *Antropocén*, ed. Petr Pokorný a David Storch, 32–50. Praha: Academia.
- Kowanda-Yassin, Ursula. 2018. *Öko-Dschihad: Der grüne Islam - Beginn einer globalen Umweltbewegung*. Salzburg: Residenz Verlag.
- Koyré, Alexandre. 1957. *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press.
- Krebs, Charles. 2008. *The Ecological World View*. Collingwood: CSIRO.
- Kuhn, Thomas. 1996. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kula, Erhun. 2001. E. „Islam and Environmental Conservation.“ *Environmental Conservation* 28, no. 1 (March): 1–9.
- Kula, Erhun. 2003. „Islam and Utilisation Policies for Environmental Resources.“ *Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics* 14, no. 3 (July): 213–226.
- KUNA (Kuwait News Agency). 2000. „al-Muntada al-Alami al-Awwal li-l-Bi'a min Manzur Islami Yakhtatimu A'malahu bi-Jidda [The First International Conference on the Environment from an Islamic Perspective Finishes its Proceedings in Jeddah].“ October 25.  
<https://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=1120248&language=ar>
- Lafmejani, Sadeq Asghari. 1394/2015. *Usul-e Tarbiyat-e Zistmohiti dar Eslam* [Fundamentals of Environmental Education in Islam]. Tehran: Sepehr.
- Landau, Jacob M. 2015. *Pan-Islam: History and Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Lawrence, Bruce, ed. 2005. *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*. London: Verso.
- Lewis, Bernard. 2002. *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- LifeMakers UK and IFEES. 2008. *Muslim Green Guide to Reducing Climate Change*. Retrieved from  
[https://www.ifees.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/muslim\\_green\\_guide.pdf](https://www.ifees.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/muslim_green_guide.pdf)

- Llewellyn, Othman. 1982. "Desert Reclamation and Conservation in Islamic Law." *Muslim Scientist* 11, no. 9: 9–29.
- Llewellyn, Othman. 1983. "Shari‘ah Values Pertaining to Landscape Planning and Design." In *Islamic Architecture and Urbanism*. Dammam, Saudi Arabia: King Faisal University.
- Llewellyn, Othman. 1984. "Islamic Jurisprudence and Environmental Planning." *Journal of Research in Islamic Economics* 1, no. 2.
- Llewellyn, Othman. 2003. „The Basis for a Discipline of Islamic Environmental Law.“ In Foltz, Denny, and Baharuddin 2003, 185–247.
- Lorenzini, Daniele. 2015. „What is a ‚Regime of Truth‘.“ *Le foucauldien* 1, no. 1: 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.16995/lefou.2>
- Louër, Laurence. 2008. *Transnational Shi’a Politics: Religious and Political Networks in the Gulf*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lovejoy, Arthur O. 1936. *The Great Chain of Being: a study of the history of an idea*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Macnaghten, Phil, and John Urry. 1998. *Contested Natures*. London: SAGE.
- Mahasneh, Hyder Ihsan. 1995. „Islamic Faith Statement.“ *Aliance of Religions And Conservation*. Accessed 6.12.2018. [www.arcworld.org/faiths.asp?pageID=75](http://www.arcworld.org/faiths.asp?pageID=75)
- Majeed, Kori & Saarah Yasmin Latif. 2020. „Forty Green Hadith: Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad on Environmental Justice & Sustainability.“ Available at: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DMYDf997\\_SV\\_dtJ5tEVIIz4jjTHCNze7/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DMYDf997_SV_dtJ5tEVIIz4jjTHCNze7/view)
- Mangunjaya, Fachruddin (Personal Website). n.d. „*The story of the Indonesian Muslim Conservation Movement*.“ May 6. Accessed April 23, 2024. <http://www.drfachruddin.com/24/05/2019/the-story-of-the-indonesian-muslim-conservation-movement/>
- Mangunjaya, Fachruddin Majeri, and Jeanne Elizabeth McKay. 2012. "Reviving an Islamic Approach for Environmental Conservation in Indonesia." *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology* 16, no. 3: 286–305. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685357-01603006>
- Mangunjaya, Fachruddin Majeri. 2010a. „Developing Environmental Awareness and Conservation Through Islamic Teaching.“ *Journal of Islamic Studies* 22, 1 (January): 36–49.
- Mangunjaya, Fachruddin. 2010b. „Report on First International Conference on Muslim Action on Climate Change. Bogor, Indonesia 9-10 April 2010.“



- [https://www.academia.edu/2084876/Muslim\\_Conference\\_on\\_Climate\\_Change\\_Action\\_Bogor\\_10\\_11\\_April\\_2010](https://www.academia.edu/2084876/Muslim_Conference_on_Climate_Change_Action_Bogor_10_11_April_2010)
- Mann, Michael. 2004. „Comparative Historical Sociology.“ A part of an interview by Harry Kreisler, „Incoherent Empire, Conversation with Michael Mann“, *Conversations with History*, Institute of International Studies, UC Berkeley (February 27). Retrieved from <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people4/Mann/mann-con2.html>
- Manzoor, Parvez. 1984. „Environment and values: the Islamic perspective.“ In Sardar 1984a, 150–169.
- Manzoor, S. Parvez. 2003. „Nature and culture: An Islamic perspective.“ In *Nature across cultures: Views of nature and the environment in non-Western cultures*, 421–32. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Maqsud, Zain al-Din ‘Abd al-. 1986. *Al-Bi’a wa-l-Islam: Ru’ya Islamiyya* [The Environment and Islam: An Islamic View]. Kuwait.
- Marcuse, Herbert. 1964. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- March, Andrew F. “Genealogies of Sovereignty in Islamic Political Theology.” *Social Research* 80, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 293–320.
- Masood, Ehsan. 2006. „Introduction: The Ambiguous Intellectual.“ In *How Do You Know? Reading Ziauddin Sardar On Islam, Science And Cultural Relations*, edited and authored by Ehsan Masood and Ziauddin Sardar, 1–11. London: Pluto Press.
- Masri, Al-Hafiz B. A. 1992. „Islam and Ecology“ In Khalid and O’Brien, 1–23.
- Masri, Al-Hafiz. 1988. *Animals in Islam*. Athene Trust.
- Masri, Al-Hafiz. 1989. „Hafiz Bashir Ahmad Masri.“ *Quern Wiki*. Retrieved from: <https://wiki.qern.org/ahmadiyya/ahmadiyya-as-a-cult/prominent-people-who-left-the-cult/bashir-ahmad-masri>
- McCormick, John. 1989. *Reclaiming Paradise: The Global Environmental Movement*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- McGrath, Sean J. 2019. *Thinking Nature: An Essay in Negative Ecology (New Perspectives in Ontology)*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- McKee, Emily. 2016. *Dwelling in Conflict: Land Relations in the Negev Region of Israel*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- McKibben, Bill. 2015. „Climate Change: A Warning from Islam.“ *The New York Review*, August 24. <https://www.nybooks.com/online/2015/08/24/climate-change-warning-islam/>
- McNeill, John R. 2003. „Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History.“ *History and Theory* 42, no. 4 (December): 5–42.

- McNeill, John R. 2010. „The State of the Field of Environmental History.“ *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 35: 345–374.
- McNeill, John. 2000. *Something New Under the Sun*. New York: Norton.
- McNeill, William H. 1976. *Plagues and Peoples*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press / Doubleday.
- Meadows, Donella G., Dennis L. Meadows, Jorgen Randers and William W. Behrens III. 1972. *The Limits to Growth*. New York: Universe Books.
- Merchant, C. 1982. *The Death of Nature: women, ecology and the scientific revolution*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.
- Mevorach, Ian. 2015. In Search of a Christian Muslim Common Path from Desacralization to Resacralization of Nature: Sallie McFague and Seyyed Hossein Nasr on the Ecological Crisis. (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation). Boston: School of Theology, Boston University, 2015.
- MEWA. (Ministry of Environment, Water & Agriculture). n.d. „The General Authority of Meteorology and Environmental Protection.“ Accessed October 14, 2022. <https://www.mewa.gov.sa/en/Partners/Pages/الهيئة العامة للأرصاد وحماية البيئة.aspx>
- Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power. Volume I, A History of Power From the Beginning to A.D. 1760*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Mikhail, Alan, ed. 2013a. *Water on Sand: Environmental Histories of the Middle East and North Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mikhail, Alan. 2011. „Global Implications of the Middle Eastern Environment.“ *History Compass* 9, no. 12 (December): 952–970.
- Mikhail, Alan. 2011. *Nature and Empire in Ottoman Egypt: An Environmental History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mikhail, Alan. 2013. *The Animal in Ottoman Egypt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mikhail, Alan. 2013b. „Introduction: Middle East Environmental History: The Fallow between Two Fields.“ In Mikhail 2013a, 1–26.
- Mikhail, Alan. 2017. *Under Osman’s Tree: The Ottoman Empire, Egypt and Environmental History*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Mitchell, Timothy. 2011. *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*. London: Verso Books.
- MML (Magyarországi muszlimok lapja [Hungarian Muslims Newspaper]). n.d. „Az iszlám környezetvédelemre ösztönző tanításai [The teachings of Islam encouraging environmental protection].“ <http://www.mohamed.hu/index.php?menu=kornyezet>

- Mohamed, N. 2014. „Islamic Education, Eco-ethics and Community.“ *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 33, no. 3: 315–328.
- Morton, Timothy. 2009. *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*. Harward: Harward University Press.
- Murad, Munjed M. 2010. „Islamic Environmental Stewardship: Nature and Science in the Light of Islamic Philosophy.“ *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 63, no. 1–2: 145–163.
- Murad, Munjed M. 2012. „Inner and Outer Nature: An Islamic Perspective on the Environmental Crisis.“ *Islam and Science* 10, no. 2 (Winter): 117–137.
- Myriad. n.d. „Joanne O’Brien.“ Accessed May 23, 2024.  
<https://myriadeditions.com/creator/joanne-obrien/>
- Nabulsi, Muhammad Ratib al-. 2010. „Al-Hifaz ‘ala al-Bi’a bi Daw’i al-Islam“ [Environmental Protection in the Light of Islam]. Sermon, 15.10.  
<http://nabulsi.com/blue/ar/artp.php?art=5412>
- Naess, Arne. 1973. „The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement. A summary.“ *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy* 16, no. 1–4: 95–100.
- Naseef, Abdullah Omar. 1986. „The Muslim Declaration on Nature.“ Assisi, September 29. Retrieved from: <http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/THE%20ASSISI%20DECLARATIONS.pdf>
- Nash, Roderick. 1967. *Wilderness and the American Mind*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. 1993. *The Need for a Sacred Science*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein & Muzaffar Iqbal. 2007. “The Islamic Perspective on the Environmental Crisis: Seyyed Hossein Nasr in Conversation with Muzaffar Iqbal.” *Islam & Science* 5, no. 1 (Summer): 75–96.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein & Ramin Jahanbergloo. 2010. *In Search of the Sacred: A Conversation with Seyyed Hossein Nasr on His Life and Thought*. Santa Barbara, Cal.: Praeger.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. (1968) 1990. *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man*. London: Unwin.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. 1964. *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines: Conceptions of Nature and Methods Used for Its Study by the Ikhwan al-Safa, al-Biruni, and Ibn Sina*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. 1968. *Science and Civilization in Islam*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. 1992. "Islam and Environmental Crisis." In Rockefeller and Elder 1992, 83–108.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. 1996. *The Religion and the Order of the Nature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. 1997. "Islam and Environmental Crisis." In *Islam and the Environment*, edited by A. Agwan, pp. New Delhi: Institute of Objective Studies, 1997.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. 2000. "The Spiritual and Religious Dimensions of the Environmental Crisis." *The Ecologist* 30 (January): 18–20.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. 2001. „An Intellectual Biography.“ In *The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, edited by Lewis Edwin Hahn, Randal E. Auxier & Lucian W. Stone, Jr., 3–85. Chicago – La Salle: Open Court 2001.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. 2003. "Islam, the Contemporary Islamic World, and the Environmental Crisis." In Foltz, Denny, and Baharuddin 2003, 85–106.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. 2015. "A Religious Nature: Philosopher Seyyed Hossein Nasr on Islam and the Environment." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 71, no. 5: 13–18.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. 2017. „God is Absolute Reality and All Creation His Tajalli (Theophany).“ In Hart 2017, 3–11.
- Nasr, Seyyed Vali R. 1991. „Islamization of Knowledge: A Critical Overview.“ *Islamic Studies* 30, no. 3 (Autumn): 387–400.
- Nelsen, Arthur. 2015. „Islamic leaders issue bold call for rapid phase out of fossil fuels.“ *The Guardian*, August 18.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/aug/18/islamic-leaders-issue-bold-call-rapid-phase-out-fossil-fuels>
- Niamir-Fuller N., I. Özdemir and J. Brinkman. 2016. *Environment, Religion and Culture in the Context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. A Discussion Note prepared for the Second International Seminar on Environment Culture and Religion – Promoting Intercultural Dialogue for Sustainable Development (23 – 24 April 2016, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran). Nairobi: UNEP.  
[https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/8696/Environment,\\_religion\\_and\\_culture\\_in\\_the\\_context\\_of\\_the\\_2030\\_agenda\\_for\\_sustainable\\_development-2016Environment,\\_religion\\_and\\_culture\\_in\\_the\\_context\\_.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/8696/Environment,_religion_and_culture_in_the_context_of_the_2030_agenda_for_sustainable_development-2016Environment,_religion_and_culture_in_the_context_.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y)
- Nilan, Pam. 2021. „Muslim Youth Environmentalists in Indonesia.“ *Journal of Youth Studies* 24, no. 7: 925–940.

- Osborn, Fairfield. 1948. *Our Plundered Planet*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.
- Ouis, Soumaya Pernilla. 1998. "Islamic Eco-theology based on the Quran". *Islamic Studies* 37, no. 2, (Summer): 151–181.
- Ozdemir Ibrahim. 2012. *La relación de todo con todo. La ética ecologista desde la perspectiva del Corán*. Fuente: Vida Halal, 2012. Available at: <https://audir.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ecologia-islam.pdf>
- Özdemir, İbrahim. 1997. *Çevre ve Din* [Environment and Religion]. Ankara: Ministry of Environment.
- Özdemir, İbrahim. 2003. „Toward an Understanding of Environmental Ethics from a Qur’anic Perspective.“ In Foltz, Denny and Baharuddin 2003, 3–37.
- Ozdemir, Ibrahim. 2008a. *The Ethical Dimension of Human Attitude Towards Nature: A Muslim Perspective*. Istanbul: Insan Publications.
- Ozdemir, Ibrahim. 2008b. *al-Bi’a fi al-Islam* [The Environment in Islam]. Cairo: Balansiya.
- Ozdemir, Ibrahim. 2021. „Al-Mizan (Balance) as a Framework for Islamic Environmental Ethics and Sustainability.“ Presentation at the Environmentalism and the Muslim World Webinar organized by The Alwaleed Centre at The University of Edinburg, online, Session 2, October 20, 2021. [https://ed-ac-uk.zoom.us/rec/play/SIO-jjqTdd1C\\_auAnPs2nNC1NHEr\\_9ZRC2EnxExc09UA-nrsihBDrmZRDjDv2JsHw6eMsDXe15DiFu6.w9n72v4BRSTVZ900?continueMode=true&\\_x\\_zm\\_rtaid=FqoD-mGhRxG5uwXy6s2Hag.1644053641983.1b4a7eaf6577d15ae023c9a39637fa1d&\\_x\\_zm\\_rhtaid=417](https://ed-ac-uk.zoom.us/rec/play/SIO-jjqTdd1C_auAnPs2nNC1NHEr_9ZRC2EnxExc09UA-nrsihBDrmZRDjDv2JsHw6eMsDXe15DiFu6.w9n72v4BRSTVZ900?continueMode=true&_x_zm_rtaid=FqoD-mGhRxG5uwXy6s2Hag.1644053641983.1b4a7eaf6577d15ae023c9a39637fa1d&_x_zm_rhtaid=417)
- Ozdemir, Ibrahim. n.d.a. „Curriculum Vitae.“ *Academia.edu*. Accessed October 7, 2022. <https://uskudar.academia.edu/ibrahimozdemir/CurriculumVitae>
- Padden, Brian. 2010. „Muslim Environmentalists Push for Green Hajj.“ VOA, April 12. Accessed October 27, 2010. <https://www.voanews.com/a/muslim-environmentalists-push-for-green-haj-90738449/115798.html>
- Paden, Roger. 1988. „Understanding Scientific Traditions: On Improving the History and Philosophy.“ *Metaphilosophy* 19, no. 3/4 (July/October): 209–222.
- Parvaiz, Mohammad Aslam. 2003. „Scientific Innovations and *Al-mizan*.“ In Foltz, Denny, and Baharuddin 2003, 393–401.
- Parvaiz, Mohammad Aslam. 2008a. „Islam on Man and Nature.“ In Taylor and Kaplan 2008, 875–879.

- Parvaiz, Mohammad Aslam. 2008a. „Islam on Man and Nature.“ In Taylor and Kaplan 2008, 875–879.
- Parvaiz, Mohammad Aslam. 2008b. „Islamic Foundation for Science and Environment.“ In Taylor and Kaplan, 884–885.
- Parvaiz, Mohammad Aslam. 2015. „Exploring the Green Dimensions of Islam.“ In Brunn 2015, 175–185.
- Parvaiz, Mohammad Aslam. n.d.a. „Curriculum Vitae.“ Accessed October 6, 2022. <https://independent.academia.edu/MAslamParvaizDrParvaiz/CurriculumVitae>
- Perry, John S., and Michael MacCracken. 2002. „The Earth System.“ In *Encyclopedia of Global Environmental Change*, vol. 1: Social and Economic Dimensions of Global Environmental Change, ed. Ted Munn, 1–11. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Peterson, Daniel Carl. 2006. „Creation.“ In *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān Vol. 1*, ed. by Janne Dammen McAuliffe, 472–480. Leiden: Brill.
- Plate, Brent S., ed. 2015. *Key Terms in Material Religion*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Pogue, Neall. 2022. *The Nature of the Religious Right: The Struggle between Conservative Evangelicals and the Environmental Movement*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Pogue, Neall. 2023. „How Evangelicals Moved from Supporting Environmental Stewardship to Climate Scepticism.“ *The Conversation*, January 30, <https://theconversation.com/how-evangelicals-moved-from-supporting-environmental-stewardship-to-climate-skepticism-196727>
- Pomeranz, Kenneth. 2000. *The Great Divergence: China, Europe and the Making of the Modern World Economy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Pope Francis. 2015. „Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home.“ Encyclical, May 24. Available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)
- Pope Paul VI. 1971. *Octogesima Adveniens*. Encyclical. [www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_apl\\_19710514\\_octogesima-adveniens.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniens.html).
- Popper, Karl R. 2002. *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. London: Routledge.
- Pouran, Hamid & Hassan Hakimian, ed. 2019. *Environmental Challenges in the MENA Region: The Long Road from Conflict to Cooperation*. London: Gingko.
- PPIUN (Pusat Pengajian Islam Universitas Nasional). 2010. „Statement of Muslim Conference on Climate Change Action, Bogor 2010.“ April 12.

- Accessed October 26, 2022. <http://ppi.unas.ac.id/muslim-conference-on-climate-change-action-bogor/>
- Prince Charles. 2010. „Islam and the Environment.“ Lecture at the Celebration of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford, June 9.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4em8b4Wm1RQ>
- Prince Philip. 2003. „Interview with Prince Philip.“ Interviewed by ARC website. July. <http://www.arcworld.org/news11f0.html?pageID=1>
- Pursley, Sara. 2019. *Familiar Futures: Time, Selfhood, and Sovereignty in Iraq*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- PWR (Parliament of the World Religions). 2022. „Climate Action.“  
<https://parliamentofreligions.org/climate-action/>
- PWR (Parliament of the World Religions). 2022. „Declaration on Climate Change of the 2015 Parliament of the World’s Religions.“  
<https://parliamentofreligions.org/civicrm/petition/sign/?sid=4&reset=1>
- Qadri, Hossein Mohi-ud-Dinjaddin. 2021. *Islam Aur Tahafuz-e Maholiyat* [Islam and the Environmental Protection]. Lahore: Minhaj al-Quran.
- Qaradawi, Yusuf al-. 2001. *Ri‘ayat al-Bi‘a fi Shari‘at al-Islam* [The Care for the Environment in the Islamic Shari‘a]. Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq.
- Qaradawi, Yusuf al-. 2005. „Ri‘ayat al-Bi‘a fi Shari‘a al-Islamiyya“ [The Care for the Environment in the Islamic Sharia]. *Al-Shari‘a wa-l-Hayat* [Sharia and Life], al-Jazeera, June 12. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_56K35YIOuw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_56K35YIOuw)
- Qaradawi, Yusuf al-. 2010. „al-Raka‘iz al-Islamiyya li-Ri‘ayat al-Bi‘a“ [Islamic Tenets for the Care for the Environment]. Fifteenth General Conference of the Royal House Institute on the Islamic Thinking. September 27–29, Amman, Jordan.
- Qasmi, Jahangir Haider, and Khalid Saifullah Rahmani. 2023. *Islam Aur Maholiyat* [Islam and the Environment]. Quran wa Hadith.
- QMN (Qadiriyyah Movement, Nigeria). 2012. „Long-term Plan on the Environment—summary.“ Accessed October 26, 2022.  
<http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/Nigeria-Qadiriyyah-Summary-Sep2012.pdf>
- Quadir, Tarik M. 2013. *Traditional Islamic Environmentalism: The Vision of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*. Lanham, Mar.: University Press of America.
- Quadir, Tarik Masud. 2017. „Islam and Sustainability: The Norms and the Hindrances.“ In *Routledge Handbook of the History of Sustainability*, edited by Jeremy L. Caradonna, 120–135. London: Routledge.

- Rahman, Mothiur. 2019. „XR: Extinction Rebellion.“ *Critical Muslim* 29, no. 3 (January). <https://www.criticalmuslim.io/xr-extinction-rebellion/>
- Rajab, Ahmad. „Muslim má pečovat o svoje okolí a životní prostředí“ [Muslim Shall Care for His Environs and the Environment]. Khutba, June 29, 2018, Prague, Czech Republic. <https://islam.cz/2018/07/05/muslim-ma-pecovat-o-svoje-okoli-a-zivotni-prostredi-29-6-2018/>.
- Rasyuni, Ahmad al-. 2005. *Imam Al Shatibi's Theory of the Higher Objectives and Intents of Islamic Law*. Trans. Nancy Roberts. International Institute of Islamic Thought. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvkjb1w9>.
- Reuter, Thomas A. 2015. „The Green Revolution in the World's Religions: Indonesian Examples in International Comparison.“ *Religions* 6: 1217–1231. doi:10.3390/rel6041217
- Reynolds, Nancy Y. 2013. Building the Past: Rockscapes and the Aswan High Dam in Egypt. In Mihail 2013a, 181–206.
- Rice, Gillian. 2006. „Pro-Environmental Behavior in Egypt: Is there a Role for Islamic Environmental Ethics?“ *Journal of Business Ethics* 65: 373–390.
- Ritchie, Hannah, Max Roser & Pablo Rosado. 2020 "CO<sub>2</sub> and Greenhouse Gas Emissions." *OurWorldInData.org*. <https://ourworldindata.org/co2-and-greenhouse-gas-emissions>
- Ritzer, George. 2001. *Explorations in Social Theory: From Metatheorizing to Rationalization*. London: SAGE.
- Rizvi, Ali Raza. 2005. „Pakistan.“ In Foltz 2005a, 55–74.
- Rockefeller, Steven, and John Elder, eds. 1992. *Spirit and Nature: Why the Environment Is a Religious Issue*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Roy, Olivier. 1994. *The Failure of Political Islam*. Trans. Carol Volk. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Sadar, Husain M. 1984. „Science in Islam: Is There a Conflict?“ In Sardar 1984a, 15–25.
- Said, Edward. 1979. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Şaliha, ‘Ashi. 2012 „Al-Tanmiya al-Mustadama fi al-Manhaj al-Islami [The Islamic Approach to Sustainable Development].“ *Al-Multaqa al-Duwali hawla: Muqawwimat Tahqiqi al-Tanmiya al-Mustadama fi al-Iqtisad al-Islami [International Meeting to Preconditions of Attainment of Sustainable Development in Islamic Economy]*. University of Guelma, December 3–4.
- Salijuq, Affan. 1973. „Ibn Khaldun's Study of Physical Environment.“ *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 21, no. 4 (October): 219.
- Samuel, Katja. 2010. „The Normative Influence of Islamic Shari’ah on Current UN Discourse on Justice and Sustainable Development.“ In *Global Justice*



- and Sustainable Development*, edited by Duncan French, 109–130. Leiden: Brill.
- Saniotis, Arthur. 2012. „Muslims and ecology: forstoring Islamic environmental ethics.“ *Contemporary Islam* 6, no. 2: 155–171.
- Sarant, Louise. 2012. “Egypt mourns Mohamed Kassas, the country’s pioneer environmentalist.“ *Egypt Independent*, March 21.  
<https://www.egyptindependent.com/egypt-mourns-mohamed-kassas-countrys-pioneer-environmentalist/>
- Sardar, Ziauddin & Ehsan Masood. 2006. *How Do You Know? Reading Ziauddin Sardar On Islam, Science And Cultural Relations*. London: Pluto Press.
- Sardar, Ziauddin, ed. 1984a. *The Touch of Midas: Science, values and environment in Islam and the West*. Mapusa: The Other India Press [Published simultaneously in 1984 by Manchester University Press].
- Sardar, Ziauddin, ed. 1989. *An Early Crescent: The Future of Knowledge and the Environment in Islam*. London: Mansell.
- Sardar, Ziauddin. 1985. *Islamic Futures: The Shape of Ideas to Come*. London: Mansell.
- Sardar, Ziauddin. 1991. „Nahwa Nazariyya Islamiyya ‘an al-Bi’a” [Towards an Islamic Theory of the Environment]. *Al-Muslim al-Mu‘asir* 59 (February 28). Archived at: <https://almuslimalmuaser.org/1991/02/28/-نحو-نظرية-إسلامية-عن-البيئة/أبحاث/>
- Sarkia, Matti & Tuukka Kaidesoja. 2023. „Two approaches to naturalistic social ontology.“ *Synthese* 201 (March): 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-023-04105-6>
- Sartawi, Fu’ad ‘Abd al-Latif al-. 1999. *Al-Bi’a wa-l-Bu’d al-Islami* [The Environment and the Islamic Dimension]. Amman: al-Masira.
- Saudilegal. N.d. „Environmental Laws.“ Accessed November 23, 2023. <https://www.saudilegal.com/saudi-law-overview/environmental-laws>
- Saunders, Manu E., Jasmine K. Janes & James C. O’Hanlon. 2019. „Moving On from the Insect Apocalypse Narrative: Engaging with Evidence-Based Insect Conservation.“ *BioScience* 70, no. 1 (January): 80–89.
- Sayem, Abu Md. 2021a. „A Survey Study of Recent Works on Nasr’s Eco-Religious Thought and Approach.“ *Journal of Islam in Asia* 18, No. 1 (June): 231–250. : <https://doi.org/10.31436/jia.v18i1.858>
- Sayem, Md. Abu. 2018. “Islamic Teaching and Practice of Environmental Ethics in Bangladesh: A Case Study.” *Quest: Studies on Religion and Cultures in Asia* 3: 1–28.

- Scramelli, Caterina. 2021. *How to Make a Wetland: Water and Moral Ecology in Turkey*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Segalla, Spencer. 2020. *Empire and Catastrophe: Decolonization and Environmental Disaster in North Africa and Mediterranean France since 1954*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Segdwick, Mark. 2004. *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Setia, Adi. 2007. „The Inner Dimension of Going Green: Articulating an Islamic Deep Ecology.“ *Islam and Science* 5, no. 2 (Winter): 117–150.
- Setia, Adi. 2014. „The Islamic Gift Economy.“ *Islamic Gift Economy, Blog*. <https://islamicgifteconomy.org/index.php/easyblog/entry/the-islamic-gift-economy>
- Shah-Kazemi, Reza. 2017. “From Sacrilege to Sacralisation: Seyyed Hossein Nasr's Perspectives on the Ecological Crisis in the Light of the Holy Qur'an.” *Sacred Web* 40, (Winter): 103–111.
- Shah-Kazemi, Reza. 2021. *Seeing God Everywhere: Qur'anic Perspectives on the Sanctity of Virgin Nature*. Cambridge: Muslim Academic Trust.
- Shaikh, Salman. 2013. „Islam and Environmental Economics.“ *Journal of Islamic Banking & Finance* 30, no. 1 (1 January): 35–43.
- Sheha, Abd Ar-Rahman Ash-. 2016 (1438). *The Key to Understanding Islam*. Riyadh: Cooperative Office for Islamic Propagation in Rabwah.
- Sherma, R. D. & P. Bilimoria, eds. 2022. *Religion and Sustainability: Interreligious Resources, Interdisciplinary Responses*. Cham: Springer.
- Shezad, Kamran. 2018. „Spotlight: Kamran Shezad.“ An Interview by IEMA. November 2. Available at: <https://www.iema.net/articles/spotlight-kamran-shezad>
- Shezad, Kamran. n.d. *A Muslim's Guide to Climate Change*. Bahu Trust. [https://bahustrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/CC\\_Bahu\\_V2.pdf](https://bahustrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/CC_Bahu_V2.pdf)
- Shihata, ‘Abdallah. 2001. *Ru'yat al-Din al-Islami fi al-Hifaz ‘ala al-Bi’a* [The Islamic Religion's View on Environmental Protection]. Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq.
- Shirazi, Muhammad Husayn. 2000. *Al-Bi'a, al-Fiqh* [The Environment, The Islamic Jurisprudence]. Beirut: Hay'at Muhammad al-Amin.
- Schaeffer, Francis. 1970. *Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology*. Carol Stream: Tyndal House.
- Schwencke, Anne M. 2012. „Globalized Eco-Islam. A Survey of Global Islamic Environmentalism.“ Leiden: Leiden Institute for Religious Studies,

- February 23, 2012. <http://ppi.unas.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/report-globalized-eco-islam-a-survey-schwencke-vs-24-february-2012-pdf.pdf>
- Silberman, Israela. 2005. „Religion as a Meaning System: Implications for the New Millennium.“ *Journal of Social Issues* 61, no. 4 (December): 661–643.
- Silene. 2019. „The Alliance of Religions and Conservation will be closing.“ June 30. Accessed September 20, 2023. <https://www.silene.org/en/news/the-alliance-of-religions-and-conservation-will-be-closing>
- Skirbekk, Vegard & Konrad Pędziwiatr. 2018. *Sustainability and climate change in major religions with a focus on Islam*. Birmingham: Humanitarian Academy for Development. Retrieved from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329656310\\_Sustainability\\_and\\_climate\\_change\\_in\\_major\\_religions\\_with\\_a\\_focus\\_on\\_Islam](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329656310_Sustainability_and_climate_change_in_major_religions_with_a_focus_on_Islam)
- Skocpol, Theda. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- Skrimshire, Stefan. 2019. „Extinction Rebellion and the new visibility of religious protest.“ *Open Democracy*, May 12. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/extinction-rebellion-and-new-visibility-religious-protest/>
- Sloyan, G. S. „Catechisms.“ In *New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2nd Edition, vol. 3*, edited by Thomas Carson et al., 239–246. Farmington Hills: Gale.
- Smil, Vaclav. 2017. *Energy and Civilization: A History*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Smith, Dennis. 1991. *The Rise of Historical Sociology*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Smith, Jonathan D. 2017. „Connecting Global and Local: Indonesian Religious Environmental Movement Through Spatial Analysis.“ *Kawistara* 7, no. 2 (December): 207–225.
- Sowers, Jeannie. 2018. „Environmental Activism in the Middle East and North Africa.“ In Verhoeven 2018, 27–52.
- Soymen, Mehmet. 1991. *Concise Islamic Catechism*. Ankara: Directorate Of Religious Affairs.
- Spowers, Rory. 2002. *Rising Tides: A History of the Environmental Revolution and Visions for an Ecological Age*. Edinburgh: Canongate.
- Spretnak, Charlene. 1991. *States of Grace: The Recovery of Meaning in the Post-Modern Age*. San Francisco: Harper.
- Spring, David, and Eileen Spring, ed. 1974. *Ecology and Religion in History*. New York: Harper & Row.

- Stamatopoulou-Robbins, Sophia. 2019. *Waste Siege: The Life of Infrastructure in Palestine*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Sufian Sandra M. 2007. *Healing the Land and Nation: Malaria and the Zionist Project in Palestine, 1920–1947*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Suro, Roberto. 1986. „World Wildlife Fund Begins a ‚New Alliance““ *The New York Times*, September 30. Archived at <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/09/30/world/world-wildlife-fund-begins-a-new-alliance.html>.
- Sutter, Paul S. 2021. „Putting the Intellectual Back in Environmental History.“ *Modern Intellectual History* 18: 596–605.
- Swatos, William H., Jr., and Kevin J. Christiano. 1999. “Secularization Theory: The Course of a Concept.” *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 3: 209–228.
- Taner, Edis. 2007. *An Illusion of Harmony: Science and Religion in Islam*. Amherst: Prometheus Books.
- Taraqi, Maryam Baluchiyani. 1394/2015. *Hefazat-e Mohit-e Zist: Az Didgah-e Ekhlāqi, Feqhi va Hoquqi* [Environmental Conservation: From the Ethical, Islamic-Jurisprudential, and Legal Perspective]. Mashhad: Bonyad-e Pazhuheshha-ye Eslami.
- Tarigan, Jenkonika. 2021. „The Rocks and Trees Are Our Grandparents: The Eruption of Mount Sinabung And the Religious Narratives of the Karo People in Sumatra.“ In Bagir, Northcott, and Wijzen 2021, 73–97.
- Taylor, Bron R, and Jeffrey Kaplan, eds. 2008. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*. New York: Thoemmes Continuum.
- Taylor, Bron. 2010. *Dark green religion: Nature, spirituality and the planetary future*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge – Massachusetts – London: The Belknap Press.
- Tazmini, Ghoncheh. 2008. *Khatami's Iran. The Islamic Republic and the Turbulent Path to Reform*. London: I.B.Tauris.
- Terzioğlu, Derin. 2013. „Where ‘İlm-i Hāl Meets Catechism: Islamic Manuals of Religious Instruction in the Ottoman Empire in the Age of Confessionalization.“ *Past and Present*, no. 220 (August): 79–114.
- Thatcher, Margaret. 1988. „Speech to the Royal Society.“ September 27, 1988. <https://www.margarethatthatcher.org/document/107346>
- The Department of Sermons (The Department of Sermons, The Office of Imams and Preachers, Sultanate of Oman). 2022. „Ri‘ayat al-Bi‘a fi al-Islam [The Care for the Environment in Islam].“ *Multaqa al-Khutaba’* [The Preacher’s

*Crossroads*], October 11, <https://khutabaa.com/ar/article/-رعاية-البيئة-في-الإسلام>

- The Faraday Institute. n.d. „Harfiyah Haleem.“  
<https://www.faraday.cam.ac.uk/about/people/harfiyah-haleem/>
- The Telegraph. 2010. „Gai Eaton.“ *The Telegraph*, March 30, 2010.  
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/religion-obituaries/7539134/Gai-Eaton.html>
- Thoreau, Henry David. 2004. *Walden*. Ed. by Jeffrey S. Cramer. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Thunberg, Greta. 2019. „'How dare you': Transcript of Greta Thunberg's UN climate speech.“ *NikkeiAsia*. September 25,  
<https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Environment/How-dare-you-Transcript-of-Greta-Thunberg-s-UN-climate-speech>
- Timm, Roger E. 1993. „The Ecological Fallout of Islamic Creation Theology.“ In Tucker and Grim 1993.
- Tlili, Sarra. 2010. „The Meaning of the Qur'anic Word 'dābba': 'Animals' or 'Nonhuman Animals'?“ *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 12: 167–187.
- Tlili, Sarra. 2012. *Animals in the Qur'an*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tlili, Sarra. 2014. „All Animals Are Equal, or Are They? The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā's Animal Epistle and its Unhappy End.“ *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 16, no. 2: 42–88.
- Tlili, Sarra. 2018. „Animal Ethics in Islam A Review Article.“ *Religions* 9, no. 269 (September 10): 1–18.
- Toynbee, Arnold. 1972. „The religious background of the present environmental crisis.“ *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 3, no. 1–4: 141–146.
- Tucker, Mary Evelyn & John A. Grim. 1993. *Worldviews and Ecology*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press.
- Tucker, Mary Evelyn, and John Grim. n.d.a. „The Challenge of the Environmental Crisis.“ [Introduction to the Religions of the World and Ecology Book Series, 1997–2003]. *Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology*. Accessed January 31, 2022. <https://fore.yale.edu/Publications/Books/Religions-World-and-Ecology-Book-Series/Challenge-Environmental-Crisis>
- Tucker, Mary Evelyn, and John Grim. n.d.b. „Religions of the World and Ecology Book Series.“ *Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology*. Accessed January 31, 2022. <https://fore.yale.edu/Publications/Books/Religions-World-and-Ecology-Book-Series>
- Ťupek, Pavel. 2015. *Salafitský islám*. Praha: Academia.

- Turner, Graham M. 2008. „A comparison of The Limits to Growth with 30 years of reality.“ *Global Environmental Change*, no. 18: 397–411.
- UN. 1972. Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. Accessed October 6, 2018. <http://www.un-documents.net/aconf48-14r1.pdf>
- UN. 1987. *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*. Accessed October 6, 2018. [www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf](http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf)
- UN. 1992. Agenda 21. Accessed on October 6, 2018. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf>.
- UN. 2002. Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Accessed on October 6, 2018. [http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/131302\\_wssd\\_report\\_reissued.pdf](http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/131302_wssd_report_reissued.pdf)
- UNCCD (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification). 2022. „Chronic land degradation: UN offers stark warnings and practical remedies in Global Land Outlook 2.“ April 2022, accessed September 9, 2022. <https://www.unccd.int/news-stories/press-releases/chronic-land-degradation-un-offers-stark-warnings-and-practical>
- UNEP and PWR (United Nations Environment Programme and Parliament of the World’s Religions). 2020. *Faith for Earth: A Call for Action*. Nairobi: UNEP.
- UNEP. 2019. „How all religious faiths advocate for environmental protection.“ June 7. Accessed October 26, 2022 <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/how-all-religious-faiths-advocate-environmental-protection>
- UNEP. N.d.b. „Faith-based Engagement at COP28.“ Accessed May 23, 2024. <https://www.unep.org/events/conference/faith-based-engagement-cop28>
- UNEP. N.d.a. „Faith-based Engagement at COP27.“ Accessed May 23, 2024. <https://www.unep.org/events/conference/faith-based-engagement-cop27>
- UNGA (United Nations General Assembly). 2001. „Letter dated 9 October 2001 from the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General.“ October 11. Accessed October 9, 2022. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/450621?ln=en&v=pdf>
- Vadillo, Umar Ibrahim, and Fazlun M. Khalid. 1992. „Trade and Commerce in Islam.“ In Khalid and O’Brien 1992, 69–85.
- Varlık, Nükhet. *Plague and Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean World: The Ottoman Experience, 1347–1600*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

- Veldman, Robin G. 2019. *The Gospel of Climate Skepticism: Why Evangelical Christians Oppose Action on Climate Change*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Verhoeven, Harry, ed. 2018. *Environmental Politics in the Middle East*. London: Hurst.
- Vincenti, Donatella. 2017. „‘Green’ Islam and Social Movements for Sustainability: Socio-ecological Transitions in the Muslim World.“ PhD thesis, Liberta University Internazionale Degli Studi Sociali, Luiss Guido Carli, Rome.
- Vogt, William. *Road to Survival*. 1948.
- Wahby, Noura. 2018. „Egyptian Environmentalism and Urban Grassroots Mobilization.“ In *The Right to Nature: Social Movements, Environmental Justice and Neoliberal Natures*, ed. by Elia Apostolopoulou and Jose A. Cortes-Vasquez, 101–114. London: Routledge.
- WALHI (Wahana Lingkungan Hindup Indonesia). 2017. „Scientific Meeting and XIII National Ta'aruf of Islamic Unity Youth (PERSIS) Environmental Conservation and Advocacy.“ September 18. <https://www.walhi.or.id/scientific-meeting-xiii-national-taaruf-islamic-unity-youth-persis-environmental-conservation-advocacy>
- Ward, Barbara, and René Jules Dubos. 1972. *Only One Earth: The Care and Maintenance of a Small Planet*. New York: Norton.
- Waziri, Yahya. 2004. *Al-‘Imara al-Islamiya wa-l-Bi’a: al-Rawāfid allati Shakkalat al-Ta’mir al-Islami* [Islamic Architecture and the Environment: The Currents that Created the Islamic Urbanism]. Kuwait: ‘Alam al-Ma’rifa.
- Weber, Max. 1965. *The Sociology of Religion*. Trans. Ephraim Fischhoff. London: Methuen & Co.
- Weber, Max. 1978. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Weber, Max. 2001. *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Trans. Talcott Parsons. London: Routledge.
- Wensley, Cory Lee. 1995. What was said to the Rose that made it open, was said to me, here, in my Chest: The Influence of Jalal al-Din Rumi in Seyyed Hossein Nasr’s Sufi Diagnosis of the Environmental Crisis. (Unpublished M.A. Thesis in Theology and Religious Studies). Halifax, Nova Scotia: Saint Mary’s University.
- Wescoat, James L. Jr. 2008. „Islam and Environmental Ethics.“ In Taylor and Kaplan 2008, 866–869.

- Wescoat, James L. Jr. 2008. „Islam and Environmental Ethics.“ In Taylor and Kaplan 2008, 866–869.
- WFEIP (The First World Forum on the Environment from an Islamic Perspective). 2000. „Jeddah Declaration on the Environment from the Islamic Perspective.“ Jeddah, October 25. Retrieved from: [http://www.issacharfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/jeddah\\_declaration.pdf](http://www.issacharfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/jeddah_declaration.pdf)
- White, Lynn. 1967. „The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis.“ *Science* 155 vol. 3767 (10. March): 1203–1207.
- White, Sam. 2011. *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Widiyanto, Asfa. 2016. „The Reception of Seyyed Hossein Nasr’s Ideas within the Indonesian Intellectual Landscape.“ *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 23, no. 2:193–236.
- Wijsen, Frans, and Haryani Saptaningtyas. 2021. „‘Cleanliness is Part of Faith’. Religious Values in Water Management in West-Java, Indonesia.“ In Bagir, Northcott, and Wijsen 2021, 163–182.
- Williams, R. 1972. „Ideas of Nature.“ In *Ecology: the shaping enquiry*, edited by J. Benthall. London: Longman.
- Williams, Raymond. 1973. *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Yaseen, Gada Mohd. 2014. „Environmental Ethics in Islam: Principles and Perspectives.“ *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization* 4, no. 4: 130–138.
- Yazlina, Yazid. 2008. „Faith-Based Environmentalism: A Case Study of Islamic-Based Environmental Organisations in the United Kingdom.“ Master’s thesis, ISS, Hague.
- YFRE (Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology). n.d.a. „Islam and Ecology, May 7-10, 1998.“ Accessed November 1, 2022. <https://fore.yale.edu/Event-Listings/Religions-World-and-Ecology-Conference-Series/Religions-World-and-Ecology-Archive-8>
- YFRE (Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology). N.d.b. „Islam and Ecology: Conference Participants and Abstracts.“ Accessed November 1, 2022. [https://fore.yale.edu/files/islam\\_and\\_ecology\\_conference\\_participants\\_and\\_abstracts.pdf](https://fore.yale.edu/files/islam_and_ecology_conference_participants_and_abstracts.pdf)
- YFRE (Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology). n.d.c. „Many Heavens, One Earth: Faith Commitments for a Living Planet.“ Accessed September 20, 2023. <https://fore.yale.edu/event/Many-Heavens-One-Earth-Faith-Commitments-Living-Planet>



- Yildirim, A. Kadir. 2016. „Between anti-westernism and development: political Islam and environmentalism.“ *Middle Eastern Studies* 52, no. 2 (March): 215–232.<https://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2015.1124414>
- York, Richard, Eugene A. Rosa & Thomas Dietz. 2003. „Footprints on the Earth: The Environmental Consequences of Modernity.“ *American Sociological Review* 68, no. 2 (April): 279–300.
- Zaidi, Iqtidar H. 1976. „Land use Hazards in an Arid Environment: The case of The Lower Indus Region.“ In *Ecological Guidelines for the Use of Natural Resources in the Middle East and South West Asia*, 38–60. Morges: IUCN.
- Zaidi, Iqtidar H. 1981. „On the Ethics of Man's Interaction with the Environment: An Islamic Approach.“ *Environmental Ethics* 3, no. 1: 35–47.
- Zaidi, Iqtidar H. 1986. „On the Ethics of Man's Interaction with the Environment: An Islamic Approach.“ In Hargrove 1986, 107–126.
- Zuberi, Hena. 2011. „Make your Deen Green: Muslims and their Responsibility to the Environment.“ *Muslim Matters*, January 14.  
<https://muslimmatters.org/2011/01/14/make-your-deen-green-muslims-and-their-responsibility-to-the-environment/>