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# Understanding British Muslim Environmentalism Using Qualitative Research Techniques and Issue Crawler Mapping Software

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## Abstract

The environmental crisis is increasingly being seen as both a spiritual and a moral problem. When approaching environmental problems, British Muslim environmental groups depend on a combination of premodern textual sources (the Islamic legal tradition) and rational elaborations that legitimate Western beliefs. But the combination of traditional and modern sources for each organization varies. The use of Issue Crawler mapping software reveals that among these groups, the ones that have the greatest inclination toward Islamic textual approaches are the most influential in the wider environmental movement. This finding highlights the importance of religion in solving the environmental crisis.

The dominant science-based worldview holds that resource scarcity and human-induced pollution have led to an environmental crisis (Middleton 2003; Seitz 2008). The Religions of the World and Ecology conference series at the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard Divinity School, coordinated by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim (2003), indicated that the environmental crisis stems not only from social, economic, and political factors, but also from spiritual and moral factors. Consequently, human beings need to understand ourselves from a much broader religious perspective. Religions help us to relate to nature in more fruitful ways, because religious traditions allow us to understand how to live in harmony with the environment. Religions not only have strong links with the material world but also encourage purposeful and creative actions. Religions therefore play an important role in addressing environmental problems. To evaluate this claim, I examine in this article the extent to which British Muslim environmental organizations focus on legal Islamic tradition, that is, the Quran and the prophetic tradition.

Development of British Muslim environmental organizations began during the 1980s with the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES), which is based in Birmingham and became a registered charity in 1994. The objectives of IFEES include setting up research centers that focus on traditional conservation practice, building up databases for information exchange on environmental issues, producing academic literature, and providing training modules on theoretical and practical matters. IFEES also teaches subjects revolving around environmental sciences and acts as a consultant for other international nongovernmental organizations, funding agencies, and academic institutions. The IFEES was the first organization to address environmental concerns within Islamic nations and remains the main organization at present.

Muzammal Hussain, another environmental activist and early proponent of local Muslim environmentalism, encouraged faith-based responses to global climate change and the development of genetically modified foods. Hussain set up his own group in 2004. Before that, he thought that an eco-theology was severely lacking in Britain. He felt that there were strong-minded individuals who wanted to contribute to a Muslim environmental movement, but they were scattered throughout Britain and had no awareness of one another. Each believed that nobody was interested in environmentalism apart from himself or herself, and this led to little action. Hussain believed that to get people of similar beliefs together, group meetings that formed networks and helped individuals to be more effective in local communities were necessary. This idea created the foundation for the London Islamic Network for the Environment and subsequent Muslim faith-based institutions.

Hussain considered starting a local Muslim environmental movement and began to engage in environmental activism. In 2003, he gave a presentation on

genetically modified foods from an Islamic perspective during a conference in Reading. Starting at this time, Muzammal urged the British Muslim community to organize local Islamic environmental groups. Hussain set up an informal group, but because of inconsistent efforts, it did not last. In 2004, Hussain used personal Islamic environmental e-mail lists compiled over the years to establish an Islamic environmental group in London. The first meeting consisted of three people and took place on January 10, 2004. On September 5, 2004, this group was officially named LINE (London Islamic Network for the Environment). LINE was the first local British Islamic environmental group. Hussain established networks with the wider environmental movement and still conducts outreach campaigning. His ethos is that beliefs and values about how to view the world should be built into individuals and the groups themselves.

LINE drew inspiration from various contemporary Muslim and non-Muslim sources. This may explain why it used both classical and contemporary Islamic theology. Influenced by the World Development Movement, LINE shared experiences and ideas about local Islamic environmental groups with other environmental activists in Brighton. Hussain, who initially wanted a grassroots-based Islamic local group, recognized the significance of ethnic diversity. Hussain achieved this diversity through group psychology and development, meeting skills, and consensus decision making. Seeds for Change, a Western organization, assisted LINE through workshops on issues relating to ethnic diversity. Seeds for Change provides free resources to independent grassroots groups and works with U.K. activists and campaigners to organize action that are intended to lead to positive social change. Also influential for LINE were the Gaia Education book *Beyond You and Me*, Nelson Mandela's autobiography, Gandhi's *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, and the life of Abdul Ghaffar Khan. LINE wanted to use Islamic teachings similarly to provide context for the environmental movement.<sup>1</sup>

Since the founding of LINE, now known as Wisdom in Nature (WIN), other Muslim environmental organizations have sprung up in Britain, including the Midland Islamic Network for the Environment (MINE) in Birmingham; Sheffield Islamic Network for the Environment (ShINE), formed in 2005 and currently under the leadership of Esther Rischmuller; Reading Islamic Trustees of the Environment (RITE), formed in 2009 and led by Summreen Sheikh, who was inspired by Muzammal Hussain; and Leicester Earth Guardians, which was set up in 2009 and is under the leadership of Ziyaad Lorgat.

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<sup>1</sup> For further information about the development of the London Islamic Network for the Environment/Wisdom in Nature, see [www.wisdominnature.org.uk](http://www.wisdominnature.org.uk).

## METHODS

To understand the extent to which Muslim environmental organizations have adopted Islamic textual approaches, I used a three-stage protocol. In the first stage, I used a combination of structured and unstructured interviews intertwined with a focus group exercise and supported by documentation. I used the following five general fieldwork questions in the interviews and the single focus group exercise:

- How would you describe the identity of the organization and what are its main concerns?
- How does your organization relate to the wider British Muslim community and their concerns?
- What is nature and why does it exist?
- How should humans treat natural resources and why?
- What or who is responsible for the environmental crisis, and what are the potential solutions to alleviate the crisis?

I used nondirective interviewing procedures because indirect probing makes it possible to elicit more openness from individuals. The benefits of these interviews are that the respondents provided accurate answers, small samples were sufficient because the study was based on individual attitudes and preferences, the answers were more truthful as respondents tended to reveal themselves, and it was more possible to understand the motives and make data interpretations. In more detail, five general fieldwork questions were asked of all interviewees and also presented at the focus group. This had the benefit of replication, and any differences that were noted between individuals were considered to be real ones rather than a result of the interview situation. This ensured comparability between respondents. In some cases, there are other benefits of conducting a focus group instead of individual interviews besides research participant availability. Focus groups reveal how people think and interact with each other. Individual behavior is arguably different when people are discussing issues in focus groups in contrast to single interviews. I asked the members of ShINE to participate in the focus group exercise for two reasons. First, this organization was already familiar with group discussions because they have regular monthly meetings. Second, I had developed familiarity with the members during the previous twelve months while doing some ethnographic research. This led to trust and a cohesive atmosphere for group discussion during the subsequent focus group exercise.

In the second stage, I subjected the findings of the interviews and focus group exercise to Tariq Ramadan's (2004) typology of contemporary Islamic thought and its three main constituents: the Quran, *sunna*, and *ijtihad*. These form the Shari'a Islamic legal system. The Quran is the divine revelation to the Prophet

Muhammad. The *sunna* is the sayings and actions of the Prophet. *Ijtihad* is the process through which scholar jurists implement independent reasoning when there is no clear guidance from the Quran or *sunna*. These constituents play an important role in the six possible different positions that Ramadan describes in his typology.

On the far left of the spectrum, Ramadan describes four possible perspectives that focus solely on the Quran and *sunna* as their essential reference points: scholastic traditionalism, Salafi literalism, political literalist Salafism, and Sufism.

In scholastic traditionalism, as Ramadan explains, there is strict adherence to the Quran and *sunna*, with attachment to a particular legal school of Islamic thought. There is neither questioning of the legal opinion nor scope for interpretation. This position focuses mainly on worship, traditional clothing, and applications of rulings between the 8th and 11th centuries. There is emphasis on religious practice with no participation in the political, social, or civil environment. The position of scholastic traditionalism rejects the Western social milieu.

The second position in Ramadan's typology is Salafi literalism, which protects religious practices from Western influences. Muslims who adhere to this position follow the *salaf*, which are the Prophet's companions and Muslims of the first three generations in Islamic history. The adherent rejects mediation from the traditional legal schools of thought when it comes to reading the sources. There is still immediate reference to text; however, scope for interpretation is forbidden.

The third position to which Ramadan refers is political literalist Salafism. This is a response to repression faced by the Muslim world. The scholars and intellectuals who hold this position participate in political activism and social action. Their ideas come from literalist readings of the texts concerning management of power, authority, and law. This position has a tendency toward radical revolution to oppose ruling powers such as those of the West and a struggle for an Islamic state.

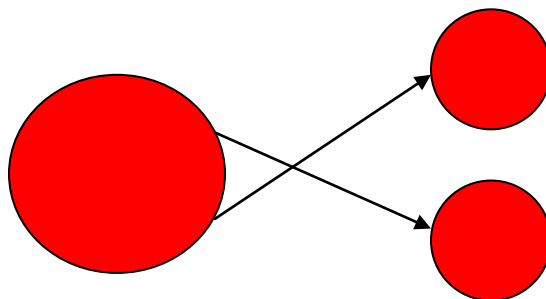
The fourth position that Ramadan describes concerning text is Sufism, whose proponents involve themselves in political and social actions. The textual readings have deeper meanings that require meditation and understanding. There is an inward movement away from disturbances and disharmony. The text is the essential point of reference because it means remembering God and being closer to Him.

Ramadan labels the far right of the spectrum as liberal rationalist reformism, which focuses exclusively on reason. Here, there is conformance to political and social environments arising from secularization in the West. There is less emphasis on the daily practice of religion as Muslims maintain the spiritual dimensions of the Islamic faith, practicing religion on a private and individual basis. Liberal reformism rejects traditional clothing that may make the wearer seem not part of Western society. The Quran and *sunna* are not the norms for social behavior. The word *liberalism* signifies elevation of reason and primacy of the individual.

Between the poles of the spectrum, Ramadan attempts to connect these far left and right positions relating to text and reason, respectively, by using the category of Salafi reformism. This position relies on both text and reason, and the principle or tool that is employed to do this is *ijtihad* (interpretation). Like adherents of literalism, as Ramadan mentions, proponents of Salafi reformism reject the rulings of the scholars of the 8th through 11th centuries, follow the *salaf*, and go straight to the textual sources and make their own interpretations of such sources. Reformism therefore uses reason alongside texts to face modern problems through the tool of interpretation. Salafi reformist intellectuals are found mainly in the West. This position recognizes the significance of Western constitutional structures, and Muslims remain loyal to the country to which they belong.

In the third stage of the protocol, I performed an analysis using Issue Crawler network mapping software<sup>2</sup> to determine which organization and therefore which approach has been most successful in the context of the wider environmental movement. This was done by feeding each organization's website address into the software and retrieving all the linkages between important actors. The software does this by using a co-link analysis, which identifies the actors that link with more than two other actors. Figure 1 illustrates this: The red circle denotes the actor, and the arrow is the direction of flow of traffic, so in Figure 1, the two arrows are out-links, highlighting the flow of information from the larger circle to the smaller circles. The size of the node signifies the actor's importance and is determined by measuring the combination of out-links and in-links.

**Figure 1: A Simplified Issue Crawler Co-Link Analysis**



### *QUALITATIVE RESEARCH RESULTS*

For my Issue Crawler analysis, I entered the URLs of the following Muslim environmental organizations into the harvester: WIN, IFEEES, RITE, ShINE, and Leicester Earth Guardians. In conjunction with these, I entered another sixty-one

<sup>2</sup> For information about Issue Crawler, see [www.govcom.org/Issuecrawler\\_instructions.htm](http://www.govcom.org/Issuecrawler_instructions.htm).

starting points into the harvester in hopes of getting a network. These additional contacts came from the June 2011 issue of *Eco-Islam* (the IFEES newsletter) and from the link pages on the WIN and ShINE websites. In the case of the Leicester Earth Guardians, the URLs for the Leicester City Council and Voluntary Action URLs were added into the harvester because these organizations have connections with the Earth Guardians. I classified the results of my research according to the following themes: institutional background, humans' relationship with nature, and responses to modernity.

### *Institutional Background*

IFEES is perhaps the only global organization to adopt an Islamic approach to social and environmental issues. Dawud Price says about the Islamic orientation of IFEES: "IFEES is intrinsically Islamic; it is an Islamic Environmental Organization." Harfiyah Haleem claims that IFEES has Sufi elements and teaches imams (religious leaders) about Islam and the environment from a Quranic perspective. She says that the organization is aimed primarily at Muslims. Price criticizes secular environmental organizations because "they make environmentalism a religion. We have common ground in the issue of environmentalism, but we worship Allah not our concern for the environment which would be a false qibla or direction."<sup>3</sup>

WIN, which is the second oldest, largest, and most experienced organization after IFEES, also draws on principles of Sufism. But there are some differences between IFEES and WIN. WIN directs its activities toward people of other faiths, showing elements of reason. Muzammal Hussain describes WIN as both Islamic and contemplative; thus WIN draws on mainstream Islamic tradition and Sufism. However, there have been shifts between mainstream Islam and Sufi thinking. Wasi Daniju and Muzammal Hussain comment that the organization now known as WIN was previously called LINE to emphasize that it was based predominantly on Islamic principles and concern for the environment. The change in name underlines the contemplative approach. This process of contemplation through reflection coincides with the tradition of Sufism. The term *wisdom*, on the other hand, refers to processes of reflection and having powerful links with knowledge that develop over a period of time. These processes require use of the heart and mind. Wisdom is an essential prerequisite for the transformation of oneself and society, and such an ethos is central to WIN and its ideology. In contrast to IFEES, WIN has less experience in operating at the global level. It concentrates on activities and projects that are more locally based. Hence WIN is considered

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<sup>3</sup> This and all other quotes in the section on qualitative research results are from the interviews and focus group exercise described above.



the first local Muslim ecological activist in the United Kingdom. One of WIN's projects is Fasting for the Planet, which it initiated in 2007–2008. This project involves a reinterpretation of the fasting principle: Fasting is done for the purpose of the planet, which is far from the conventional form of fasting that is found in the textual tradition.

Smaller and more recently founded organizations tend not to adopt contemplative or spiritual approaches and mainly focus on mainstream Islam. Consequently, they develop their activities and projects around textual sources and direct them toward the Muslim community. This mainstream Islamic approach is reflected in the names of the organizations, such as the Reading Islamic Trustees for the Environment (RITE), Sheffield Islamic Network for the Environment (ShINE), and Leicester Earth Guardians. It is worth reflecting on these names. An Islamic jurisprudence theme emerges in the name Reading Islamic Trustees for the Environment, which includes the concept of *khalifah* (stewardship) through the term *trustee*. This group decided to use the concept of trustee because the members believe that the earth has been given as a trust to human beings. Humankind is therefore the caretaker of the planet. In addition, the notion of trustee reveals that the group has taken the central theme of responsibility seriously. For RITE, looking after the environment is part of living an Islamic way of life in accordance with the *sunna* of the Prophet Muhammad. The organization argues that this is the responsibility of the Muslim community. Nabeel Nasser suggests that ShINE focuses on Muslims because it is their specific duty. Leicester Earth Guardians is open to people from other faiths and those of no faith. Ziyaad Lorgat, the founder, believes that the message about Islam and the environment must be spread to everybody. But the term *guardian* suggests the notion of *khalifah*, an Islamic precept that is found in the legal Islamic tradition.

### *Humans' Relationship with Nature*

According to Fazlun Khalid of IFEES, the Islamic perspective on environmental protection is that human conditions are set within four principles: *mizan* (balance), *tawhid* (oneness), *khalifah* (stewardship), and *fitra* (primordial nature). Khalid's colleagues in IFEES draw on the same Islamic ethics. Dawud Price of IFEES declares that humans should treat natural resources using a balancing approach: "They should treat the resources in line with an understanding indicated by a word called *mizan* which is to keep things in balance." For Price, humans should follow the guidance of Muhammad and the Quran, which emphasize that one should not be excessive in consumption and should not waste. The sources encourage sharing of resources with people who have less. Price comments: "Humans should be conscious of their needs, willing to share of what you don't need with others who have less." Harfiyah Haleem returns to the textual tradition when

she argues for the literal interpretation of *khalifah* (often translated as “vice-regency”) as succession. For Haleem, humans are put on the earth as a test; if humankind behaves unjustly, Allah will turn nature against humans and replace the offenders with other successors. Haleem refers to the Quranic stories of humans who have done terrible things being wiped off the planet and adds that nature is not here to serve the purpose of humankind alone; nature is a provision from Allah, and humankind is a late addition to His creation.

WIN continues to adopt reflective and contemplative approaches to Islamic principles such as *qadr* (proportion/measure) and *mizan* (balance). The organization relies on Sufism tradition and Islamic principles, hence underlining the significance of the textual tradition. However, like IFEEES, WIN reinterprets textual principles and puts them into environmental contexts. For instance, Muzammal Hussain reapplies balance to the financial industry, quoting transactions of justice and fairness in relation to the natural environment. He uses *fitra* (the natural state) in the same context as IFEEES does but with fewer contradictions: “*Fitra* is . . . our own innate nature or natural disposition and is the pure state in which every human being was created. Nature is something that is pure, innately good. It is the way we have been created and the wider world in essence which is surrendering to the will of God.”

The concepts mentioned above are also significant for the smaller and much more locally based Muslim environmental groups. Their stances are similar to those of the larger organizations in that they take concepts and reinterpret them in environmental contexts. In the focus group discussion among members of ShINE, the concept of *mizan* (balance) is significant. Nabeel Nasser refers to the *hadith* about water consumption in a river by an individual for ablution and applies it to the modern context, relating it to the excessive consumption of natural resources and material objects in contemporary life: “Do families really need to have fifteen cars per family, the excessive amount of food that people have?” Esther Rischmuller considers the consequences of overconsumption, arguing that overconsumption by somebody in one location decreases the amount of resources available for consumption by others elsewhere. Rischmuller believes that there is currently no equal sharing of resources; for example, there are countries that are experiencing famine. Resource scarcity is consequently a distribution problem. Debbie Miller elaborates on individuals overconsuming: “People always want more than what they got, even though they got enough.” In this view, people want more because they see the material wealth or gain of others. Miller uses an apologetic argument to justify desires for material objects: “It is okay to work and to buy material things . . . but it’s keeping balance of how much you need and whether you are taking someone else’s share.” Nabeel Nasser comments that the struggle with Western lifestyles, under the theme of material desires, “is a battle against oneself and questioning your needs which requires intelligence.”

RITE adopts a broader approach to the idea of balance. Mustafa Chaudhary relates balance in nature to the term *nima* (blessing), which denotes respect for nature. Chaudhary comments that it is difficult for people to respect nature because when a gift such as the environment is easily accessible, they take it for granted, exploiting it endlessly. To appreciate nature as a gift is to use nature's resources according to human needs and not to overconsume, says Chaudhary. He further emphasizes the importance of science to encourage more responsible social behavior toward the environment: "This will make us play the role of custodians rather than subjugator."

Ziyaad Lorgat, the founder of Leicester Earth Guardians, uses balance in the example of cutting down trees. For him, the Quran states that trees are an effective energy resource; at the same time, the *hadith* describes planting trees as charitable. For Lorgat, the two ideas complement each other, and interpretation of the sources suggests the intent of balance for humankind. There is an application of viceregency in the contemporary sense to animal welfare. Fast-food chains, which have spread through many countries, are not necessarily *halal*. They encourage an overconsumption of meat, and this means that livestock are not being raised ethically to meet consumer demand.

### *Responses to Modernity*

IFEES adopts textual approaches toward modernization and secularization. It rejects usury and the mechanistic scientific worldview. Dawud Price of IFEES states that humans allow evil in through the practice of usury, hence causing corruption. Interest-based banking systems, which are the norm in Western societies, exclude the divine in one-sided transactions. Price compares the exponential increase in the renting of money to cancer and says that there are fatal consequences for society and the economy. But usury is an essential requirement for the existing world economy, and Price is critical of Western economics, which pays more attention to firms and households than to individuals; as a result, obligations for an individual code of conduct are lacking. For Price, Islam is a life transaction of peace with justice, whereas economics is a life transaction of efficiency.

Fazlun Khalid, a member of IFEES, expresses concerns about the concept of sustainable development, which combines economic growth with conservation for a win-win situation. However, there is more emphasis on socioeconomic development than on the environment. Ironically, for Khalid, economic inequality between and within nations is widening, and there has also been more environmental degradation since the 1980s. Business organizations are less responsive to sustainable development. The United States failed to sign the Kyoto Protocol because of the adverse impact the policy was forecast to have on the U.S. economy. Khalid dramatizes technological progress negatively: It is like a drug (harmful)

with addictive effects whose consequences deepen. Global organizations are working against sustainable development. The countries that are members of the World Trade Organization account for the majority of global gross domestic product but employ a minority of the workforce. Wealth becomes concentrated in a few global companies, generating concerns about inequality. The United Nations Development Programme calls for market openness, which may negatively affect the economies of developing nations. Khalid proposes that Muslim communities become economically independent through traditional organic farming. This excludes monetary banking and the Western education systems and leads to true sustainability, according to IFEES. There is no exposure to economic theory or global financial markets, and this marks real progress.

WIN also rejects the Western economic system and the idea of usury. Unlike IFEES, WIN adopts broader approaches suggesting that the financial crisis is part of a bigger problem that includes a spiritual component. This underlines the significance of considering mystical approaches to resolve both environmental and financial problems. In a recent talk on Islam and ecology, Muzammal Hussain added a spiritual crisis to the environmental and financial dilemmas and said that all are intertwined. Hussain sees humans as developing intellectually over time for better understanding of the world but at the same time establishing “immaturity of spirit,” since knowledge is being used to “serve its own compulsions toward greed and competitiveness.” For Hussain, shifts in proportion and balance through economic growth are causing further resource utilization and leading to these inner emotional struggles.

Muzammal Hussain states that science and technology are not constraints because the Quran encourages learning. Like Islamic prayer, science becomes problematic when it becomes idolized and an individual begins to worship the path or tool instead of the creator. Science is a tool for understanding reality but becomes problematic if there is arrogance. For Hussain, science has limitations. In methodological experiments, conclusions are based on results from relatively short periods, often ten years at most, in stark comparison with the planet, which is billions of years old. But Hussain adds that if a scientific experiment confirms an effect of a change that is viewed in the context of the experiment's limits, then there is space for wisdom; science becomes a concern only when there is no humility. The world moves slowly and wisely with humility; there is no rush toward policies that are based on limited experiments. Hussain concludes that understanding whether science is detrimental to nature depends on how the scientific facts are perceived. For Hussain, technology is a tool that tends to fit conveniently into the Western sociopolitical order, accommodating economic growth and consumerism.

Smaller, more recently founded, and more locally organized Muslim environmental groups adhere to textual tradition when it comes to modernization and secularization. There is no complete adherence, and there is scope for reason

when some members argue that economic growth and science are important for environmental protection. There is some support for Western environmental policy, including sustainable development.

Nabeel Nasser of ShINE says that people show ignorance when they do not understand the larger implications of usury. For Nasser, people do not have to work hard, and there is immediate value in materialism. People do not appreciate the afterlife, so humans fulfill their desires on this planet. Life is much longer because there is the hereafter. Time should be taken for careful consideration and reflection on human actions.

The members of ShINE believe that British Muslims express little concern for the environment. Nabeel Nasser believes that local communities should look after the environment but nobody takes on the responsibility. Environmental concern needs to be at the forefront of Muslim thinking. There is plenty of negativity toward Muslims and Islam, which may in turn be causing lack of participation by Muslims in addressing environmental issues. Nasser states that Muslims feel that material things such as money and tax payments are more important. Debbie Miller confirms that the environment is a luxury good for many people, who are more worried about bills and future income. An Van Ho adds that economic security and education are both important in shaping environmental concern; even with economic insecurity, people can still be environmentally conscious because of their knowledge. By contrast, Nasser comments that wealth leads to adverse environmental consequences: wastage, desires for bigger cars, and changes to the landscapes surrounding houses. Miller feels that concern about the environment depends on class rather than ethnicity. Environmental issues need to be explained in a way that is simple and less technical so that ordinary people can understand them. Esther Rischmuller supports another perspective of class: Wealthier people have everything, so they can spare time and attention to care about the environment. Poorer people have more immediate family priorities.

Esther Rischmuller affirms that recycling is effective; however, although reusing materials saves energy, the process of recycling uses energy to create new materials. Nabeel Nasser expresses great skepticism about the scientific method. Initially, the method embodied a sense of morality, but its use is now financially driven. The scientific method deals only with what can be proven, so it immediately excludes God; science has no limits or boundaries and ventures into previously unknown territories, experimenting with and trying to bend natural laws. Nasser suggests that guidelines and rules can come from God. Science currently achieves miracles, but scientists are developing unnecessary projects. Rischmuller indicates that there is too much reliance on science without considering what the problem is. For example, to resolve the problems of the high consumption of energy, the West tends to produce more rather than using less energy.

Nabeel Nasser believes that environmental protection and economic growth complement each other. There are two possible routes toward economic development. The first is to face the problem and actively resolve it; the second is to step back and reflect deeply on the problem and approach it in a new, different way. Economic growth is effective to some extent but needs to be fairer for everybody, including future generations, says Esther Rischmuller. According to Nasser, future generations are secondary concerns; the immediate concerns should be the existing imbalances and exploitation of disadvantaged groups. Some participants reflected on the Japanese earthquake and tsunami of 2011, in which everything many people had was wiped away. It does not matter how much wealth you have, says Debbie Miller. People must start over with nothing, as wealth can all disappear. Nasser declares that death is closer than the strap of one's sandal.

Summreen Sheikh of RITE affirms that British Muslims lack concern about the environment. Muslims have to meet their basic needs first, overcoming poverty and starvation before dealing with environmental protection. She is knowledgeable about the linkages between poverty and the environment and states that British Muslims forget that poverty, war, and starvation are induced by environmental factors. Rauf Sheikh adds that even though British Muslims do not show concern about the environment, they are not necessarily "abusive" toward nature. Rauf Sheikh states that in fact British Muslims consume less because they are part of working-class society and appreciate what they already have. Rauf Sheikh says that "on a wider basis I think the Muslims have a very positive attitude towards the environment." Rauf Sheikh suggests that environmental concern is not universal among British Muslims. Youngsters are the main consumers in both the Muslim and wider communities. Rauf Sheikh believes that the members of this age cohort express less interest in recycling but that this is not their fault but rather the fault of the state and multinational corporations. Rauf Sheikh recognizes that a very high incidence of poverty may reduce environmental concern; British Muslims have certain basic needs that must be met. Having a moderate income ensures that basic needs are met and encourages environmental activism.

Mustafa Chaudhary of RITE asserts that it is very difficult to distinguish between Muslim troublemakers and Muslims who are becoming mainstream. The Muslim community feels that the West thinks that Islam is the problem. RITE encourages youngsters to participate in organizations to show that Islam can actually make positive contributions. The younger generations benefit from RITE because young Muslims tend to be detached from religion, in part because the education system has less of a focus on religious studies.

The members of RITE believe that corporate systems and consumerism are responsible for the environmental crisis. Rauf Sheikh adds that money is something on paper with no real value. Banks create money artificially by lending it out. Rauf Sheikh suggests some of the consequences of paper money: It creates

divisions on the earth as multinational corporations have the most access to capital, while access for the poor is limited because of repayment difficulties, causing further social inequality. In addition, the existing wealth of the poor loses value because the creation of money leads to inflation. This again suggests that too much wealth and very little wealth are both problematic because of overexploitation and lack of concern for the environment, respectively.

Mustafa Chaudhary likewise thinks that usury plays a massive role in environmental problems because it fuels consumerism. People now have more money available on lending terms, allowing for consumerism when buying would not otherwise be affordable. Chaudhary asserts that in China, people rarely take out loans. He asserts that during recessions, Muslims save more by pursuing environmentally sound activities such as installing energy-efficient heating systems, double glazing windows, and adding insulation. He believes that there needs to be self-control and the belief that life is temporary and the hereafter exists.

Rauf Sheikh asserts that certain conditions make science and technology acceptable and these conditions depend on human intention. Science is permissible if it is used to overcome suffering or harm such as food shortages. If science is used for self-interest, such as making money, then science is not legitimate. Rauf Sheikh feels that the current environmental problems indicate motivations for making money, so there is misuse of Western science and technology. For Summreen Sheikh, science is permissible if it encourages discoveries, but new findings should not worsen environmental conditions. Mustafa Chaudhary takes a pessimistic view of technology especially with regard to nuclear energy because of the waste problem and the because nuclear disasters like the one in Japan following the 2011 earthquake can have fatal social consequences. Chaudhary shows that there are some benefits from scientific research and development projects, such as those that address starvation, but he insists that genetic modification technologies have marketing strategies that are financially driven.

As for sustainable development, Summreen Sheikh comments that future economic growth rates must slow down or stay at current levels. For her, economic growth should be a measure of social welfare. She suggests that waste should be minimal, but people keep demanding a higher quality of life. She does not feel that environmental protection and economic growth are complementary. Sustainable development is therefore about restricting the quality of life and the rate of social consumption. But for Rauf Sheikh, corporations always create new product markets, and resources come from the environment. The members of RITE feel that efficiency in the use of resources can make a contribution, since it generates green consumption and marketing patterns. RITE shows considerable interest in fair trade, which benefits the developing countries as businesses are set up in these regions under conditions of sustainability.

According to the Leicester Earth Guardians, the British Muslim community is more interested in consumerism than in the environment. For instance, Ziyaad Lorgat says that British Muslims are “very much into consumerism, so establishing their own home and identity . . . all mainly through economics and commercial benefit for themselves to prosper.” Thus the Muslim community shows more concern for daily matters. Defensively, Lorgat does mention that U.K. Muslims retain some sort of environmental awareness that they do not really recognize. For instance, Muslims carry out recycling activities.

The Leicester Earth Guardians relate the inner with the outer aspect. Greed and desire for gain within oneself manifest externally through economic growth and commercialism. The driving factor is usury, and Ziyaad Lorgat of the Leicester Earth Guardians comments that “when a person takes usury, *riba*, interest, Allah has declared that you are declaring war with me.” The charging of interest is reaching even rural villages in Africa so that poor communities can improve their livelihoods in the longer term. But Lorgat insists that this is “setting the seed for the decline of that community.” A seed expands and increases in size in a process much like that of charging interest in the financial system. Interest has internal consequences; according to Lorgat, it removes blessings bestowed by Allah on the individual.

Ziyaad Lorgat positively engages in debates about science and technology as the group “incorporates current advances in scientific technology and renewable technology regarding food production and transport.” With regard to genetic engineering, Lorgat believes that it is too late to stop such large-scale global technology. The effects of such technology can be known only after the next couple of generations, Lorgat says, when we should be able to judge the benefits for humankind.

### ISSUE CRAWLER RESULTS

To produce a clear and meaningful Issue Crawler map (see Figure 2), I modified the settings for displaying the map to use the following criteria: (1) Only the top fifty nodes, based on a significant measure that is the amount of in-links received per node, were considered; (2) the top 30 percent of actors that showed the strongest qualitative ties to one another were included; (3) the actors with more than three ties between them were included; and (4) node size was based on the quantity of links given and received.

The most significant finding is that only IFEES, and no other British Muslim environmental organization, was present in the network map that was generated according to the criteria above. This implies that other organizations, as shown by the other forty-nine nodes, are likely to draw on IFEES for various things, including information and advice on environmental issues. The map also shows that





## DISCUSSION

From the qualitative research results, it is evident that all Muslim environmental organizations implement both text and reason. Consequently, they cannot be classified according to the pure textual categories—scholastic traditionalism, Salafi literalism, political literalist Salafism, and Sufism—which do not allow room for reasoning through critical interpretation (*ijtihad*). Likewise, these British Muslim environmental groups cannot be classified in the category of liberal reformism, which is at the right-hand end of the text-reason spectrum, where reason is fully implemented and text is insignificant. This suggests that Muslim environmental organizations intersect and overlap the categories of text and reason.

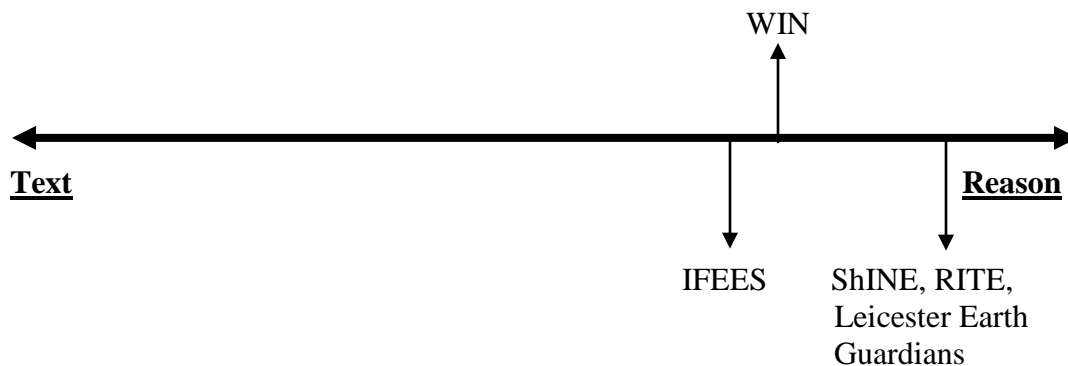
Some organizations such as IFEES are hesitant to consider themselves Salafi reformists, however. One has to be careful when assigning a label to an organization, for this may have wider consequences in terms of factional disagreements and conflicts between different members of the Muslim community. Therefore I have classified the organizations within the text-reason category, but I avoid using the term *Salafi reformism*.

The typology can use an intersecting category that explains the overlapping positions. Nevertheless, the contexts of institutional background, humans' relationship with nature, and responses to modernity are essential because they help to distinguish further the Muslim environmental organizations within the intersecting category of text and reason. This point is extremely important. The environmental contexts show where the Muslim environmental organizations are situated within this category. The environmental contexts indicate whether there is a greater degree of alignment to the textual tradition or to reason through the process of critical interpretation (*ijtihad*), that is, whether Muslim environmental organizations are tending toward the textual tradition or toward reason, despite having adopted both concepts.

It is worth explaining the positions of Muslim environmental organizations in the typology. All Muslim environmental organizations tend to be positioned toward the reason end of the middle category where text and reason intersect as shown by Ramadan's (2004) typology. But there are different degrees of alignment toward reason. Although IFEES, the most experienced and global organization, is in the reason element of the intersection, the organization shows the least degree of reason in comparison to other Muslim environmental organizations (see Figure 3). This is because in terms of the institutional background, IFEES not only has Sufi elements, according to the interview results, but also is conventionally strongly based on the Shari'a. Within both strands of thinking, the obligatory route requires the Quran and the *sunna*, that is, the textual tradition. IFEES orientates toward Muslims for the most part, and its projects and activities are mainly based on Islamic jurisprudence principles. In terms of human relationships, like

all the other groups, IFEES recontextualizes Islamic principles into environmental contexts. So in this regard, IFEES does show some element of reason through critical interpretation. However, when it comes to responses to modernity, IFEES rejects modernization and secularization as well as Western forms of development policies such as sustainable development.

**Figure 3: Organizations Within the Intersecting Category of Text and Reason**



A Muslim environmental organization that is in a position similar to that of IFEES, and for the same reasons, is WIN. WIN seems to draw on the tradition of Sufism, arguably even more so than IFEES does. WIN's Sufi approach is signaled by the name of the organization: Wisdom in Nature. However, WIN allows more scope for reasoning through critical interpretation (*ijtihad*) than does IFEES when it comes to institutional background. WIN as an organization is more open to people of other faiths and backgrounds, and its projects and activities, such as Fasting for the Planet, are far from being orthodox. There is convergence between the various organizations when it comes to humans' relationship with nature, but there is more emphasis in WIN on a Sufi outlook, so there is a greater tendency toward the textual tradition in WIN than in other organizations (see Figure 3). As for responses to modernity, WIN organization rejects modernization such as the Western financial banking systems, but there is some room for legitimizing the scientific worldview when Muzammal Hussain, the founder of WIN, says that science is a tool for finding solutions for environmental problems.

WIN seems to be the interlinking organization between IFEES and the more recently founded and smaller organizations. For example, WIN tends to use a balancing mix of text and reason. The more recently founded, smaller, and more local Muslim environmental groups also draw on both text and reason in their approaches to environmental problems. But in comparison to IFEES and to a certain degree WIN, these organizations incline more toward reason within the intersection of text and reason (see Figure 3). Environmental contexts help to distinguish

between the smaller and larger organizations; the latter are less aligned toward reason than are the smaller groups such as RITE, ShINE, and Leicester Earth Guardians, which show the strongest orientation toward reason. In terms of institutional background, the smaller groups do not have a foundation in Sufism that draws on the textual tradition. They do have commonalities with larger organizations when it comes to humans' relationship with nature. Once again, there is a tendency toward reinterpretation of textual sources as the organizations reapply the principles of the legal Islamic tradition to contemporary environmental contexts. In the case of responses to modernity, although there are divergences in thinking about secularization, modernization, and the Western environmental policy of sustainable development, these smaller organizations show greater flexibility than the more established groups do. The smaller organizations have a greater tendency to recognize the importance of economic growth, a scientific worldview, and sustainable development in resolving global environmental problems.

The geographical context is very significant. All the Muslim environmental organizations locate themselves within a non-Islamic state. They are seen as wanting to integrate with the Western community, and such factors result in these organizations tending toward reason when it comes to environmental issues. IFEES is indeed located in the United Kingdom, but its activities have spread to an international scale, whereas the activities of the other organizations discussed here are largely restricted to England. As a result, IFEES exposes itself to trends in Islamic nations that rely on the Islamic textual tradition. Furthermore, Fazlun Khalid, the founder of IFEES, is a scholar himself. It is reasonable to suppose that Islamic scholars will have more of an Islamic orientation, and this scholarly attribute informs IFEES at a basic level.

The qualitative data suggest that IFEES is the least oriented toward the reason aspect within the text-reason category. The more local grassroots Muslim faith-based groups tend toward reason. These findings complement the network map found by using Issue Crawler mapping software. Issue Crawler found IFEES to be the most successful organization in the network. Its position on the network map suggests that for an organization to be successful or influential in the environmental movement, it must retain to a great extent an Islamic environmental ethic within the intersecting category. The finding highlights that there is a place for the Islamic tradition in global contemporary environmental debates, thus underlining the importance of religion in addressing environmental concerns.

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