

Conceptualizing the Qur’anic Model of Holistic Sustainability Based on the General Principles of Islamic Muamalat

Atikullah Abdullah and Mohd Amir Wan Harun

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i9/4683>

DOI: 10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i9/4683

Received: 11 August 2018, Revised: 03 Sept 2018, Accepted: 22 Sept 2018

Published Online: 11 October 2018

In-Text Citation: (Abdullah & Harun, 2018)

To Cite this Article: Abdullah, A., & Harun, M. A. W. (2018). Conceptualizing the Qur’anic Model of Holistic Sustainability Based on the General Principles of Islamic Muamalat. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 8(9), 1096–1110.

Copyright: © 2018 The Author(s)

Published by Human Resource Management Academic Research Society (www.hrmars.com)

This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

Vol. 8, No. 9, September 2018, Pg. 1096 - 1110

<http://hrmars.com/index.php/pages/detail/IJARBSS>

JOURNAL HOMEPAGE

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
<http://hrmars.com/index.php/pages/detail/publication-ethics>



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



Conceptualizing the Qur'anic Model of Holistic Sustainability Based on the General Principles of Islamic Muamalat

Atikullah Abdullah and Mohd Amir Wan Harun

Islamic Studies Section, School of Humanities , Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang

Abstract

Sustainability is the mantra of the day. However, the present discussions on the topic of sustainability tend to focus more on the economic and environmental sustainability. While recognizing its importance especially in the days when researches have shown that there are not so many natural heritage left to be inherited to our offspring in the future, yet, solely focus on the economic and environmental sustainability itself is a clear example of the unsustainable approach. The exclusion of religious and spiritual dimension seems to be the most glaring flaw in the present discourse on sustainable development. Human being as the main agent for changes and development need to be comprehensively developed in both physically and spiritually. In short, we need a holistic idea of sustainability. This paper argues that the Qur'an provides the basic recipes in the form of muamalat principles for the establishment of the holistic sustainability. This is the best approach for us to consider after witnessing the failure of the mainstream idealism of socio-economic and political development.

Keywords: *Qur'anic Model, Muamalat, Sustainability, Holistic Sustainability, Sustainable Development*

Introduction

This article will argue for the holistic sustainability and sustainable development from the Islamic perspective. Before that, a brief discussion will be made on the conventional idea of sustainability and sustainable development, and some flaws in the conventional understanding of the concepts will be highlighted. This will be followed by the Islamic ideas and solution based primarily on the Islamic worldview on the nature of human being, their position in the world and their relationship with the environment and with their fellow human being. Furthermore, some underlining Islamic principles and values for the development of all facets of human life will be laid down and discussed briefly.

On the Conventional Idea of Sustainability and Sustainable Development

As observed by prominent Muslim social scientists Moten(1997) and Ansari(1994), since the past few decades, the term “development” has been an exclusive domain within the field of economics. It has been exclusively identified as "economic development" reducing the degree of progress and maturity of society to the level of its production. Within this paradigm, economic development and economic growth have been treated as identical, which usually meant an increase in some measure of national income and an increase in the standard of living. Gross National Product(GNP) and GNP per capita became the principle measuring tools of economic growth, which itself had become the principal indicator of economic development (Ghazali 1990). This means that economic development was measured purely based on income growth, consumption, and standard of living materially. Apparently, overemphasis on economic development has resulted in the tremendous economic progress in the most of the twentieth century. However as argued by Chapra(1992), at the end of the twentieth century at least three depressing phenomena have been identified. First, the enormous material wealth has not made people more contented than they were before. Second, the world is suffering from gradual depletion and outright destruction of scarce ecological and acute environmental pollution which is endangering life on earth. Third, in the domain of social life, there is a rising level of stress, tension and strife in human affairs accompanied by an increase in all the symptoms of anomie such as frustration, crime, alcoholism, drug addiction, divorce, child battering, illegitimate children, mental illness and suicide, all indicating lack of inner contentment in the life of individuals.

The malaise as mentioned above has forced many social scientists to rethink the necessity or even the desirability of wholesale economic progress (Khairulmaini 2000). It is apparent that no other single topic of discussion seems to manifest this concerns more than that of sustainable development. Facing that gloomy backdrop, there was no wonder in 1987 The Brundtland Commission Report, also called *Our Common Future*, released by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) introduced the concept of sustainable development and described how it could be achieved. This report defined the term as "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland's Report 1987). This definition, despite of criticisms and rejections, has arguably become the most often-quoted definition of sustainable development. The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, 1992, defined sustainable development as “integrating and balancing economic, social and environmental concerns in meeting our needs”. It is also recommended that “achieving this kind of integration and balance between economic, social and environmental dimensions would require new ways of looking at how we produce and we consume, how we work, how we get along with each other, or how we make decisions”. Ten years later in 2002, The Earth Summit organized in Johannesburg, South Africa agreed that the world should focus particularly on "the worldwide conditions that pose severe threats to the sustainable development of our people, which include: chronic hunger; malnutrition; foreign occupation; armed conflict; illicit drug problems; organized crime; corruption; natural disasters; illicit arms trafficking; trafficking in persons; terrorism; intolerance and incitement to racial, ethnic, religious and other hatreds; xenophobia; and endemic, communicable and chronic diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis." Hasan(2006) aptly summarizes that sustainability in

conventional understanding implies three things namely, maintaining the long-run rate of economic growth, achieving inter-generational equity in the use of the natural resources and, restricting as far as possible the increase in pollution for maintaining the present quality of environment.

It is clear that the conventional idea of sustainable development does not seek to reform the comparatively destructive modernization discourse, its changes are not deep or enduring enough to label it a fundamental, revolutionary change to development policy. Since the emphasis is still on growth or sustainable growth over other components, the approach neglects to reconcile development's inherent contradictions and downfalls (Hove 2004). Perhaps the biggest flaw with the conventional idea of sustainable development is its failure to recognize the importance of religion or spiritual dimension in the whole spectrum (Shaharir 2012; Jusoff and Abu Samah 2011). Its primary concern has always been only on the socio-economic and environmental dimension of humans life without proper regard given to the somewhat more important aspects namely men spiritual stability.

The above discussion clearly demonstrates that the sought-after sustainable development remains a distant reality although various discussions, resolutions and implementations have been conducted at various levels, micro or macro. This suggests that there is a clear defect in our understanding of the concept of sustainable itself and the shortcoming in the implementation process. It is quite obvious that conventional understanding of sustainable development is limited to some external aspects of human life only such as growth, fair distribution and environmental protection ignoring the most fundamental element of sustainable development namely the human being themselves. Furthermore, the conventional and secular world view on sustainable development also tends to ignore the roles and contributions of religions in the human civilization, including in the area of development. This is a big loss to humanity if consider the wisdom enshrined in the religious scriptures especially the Qur'an in this particular subject. In the Qur'an there are many principles that could be discovered, pondered upon and internalized in our quest for a holistic sustainability. Therefore, to construct a desirable holistic model of sustainable development, the human being themselves as the agents of development must be first of all comprehensively developed. Unfortunately though, this holistic world view on sustainability model has never been satisfactorily discussed before. The following discussion departs from the current narrative of sustainable development that focuses solely on the external aspects of development to a more comprehensive understanding encompassing both external and internal aspects including the human nature, their position, roles in this universe and some of the Qur'anic principles related to the socio-economic, political and environmental development.

Holistic Sustainability and Sustainable Development

From the discussion above it is apparently clear that sustainability cannot be a one sided concept with the focus merely on the physical realm of life (Sarkawi 2016; Sarvestani & Shahvali 2008; Khan 2001). The main agent of sustainability that is the human being must first of all be holistically developed to its fullest potential, physically and spiritually. This perfection finally manifested in the way they behave in their relationship with their surrounding, fellow human beings and the nature in the forms of economic life, social life, political life or ecological consideration. There must be an

integrated process of developing human being between the inculcation of the true quality of perfect and well balanced human being and the capability of carrying out their roles as the vicegerents and the servants on the earth.

In the Islamic worldview, human being are of two dimensions. First is natural composition and second, is natural function. In term of natural composition, human being constitutes of external or physical as well as internal or spiritual components. The physical component includes mental, intellectual and physical body whereas spiritual component includes elements such as heart (*qalb*), soul (*ruh*) and desire (*nafs*). For Muslims, these spiritual elements of the human being are not less important than the physical elements and therefore need to be equally treated and kept healthy in order to have a perfect and perfect human being (*al-insan al-kamil*). The existence and importance of spiritual elements in human beings are acknowledged by many scholars including those who are not from Islamic tradition. They all agree that it is the spiritual nature rather than the animal nature which defines humanity. Being human implies, therefore, is spiritual. Arnold Toynbee's observation in this regard truly depicts the need of spiritually developed human beings that can take care of the sickness of modern society. He writes, 'I agree that the sickness of modern society can be cured only by a spiritual revolution in the hearts and minds of human beings. Social maladies cannot be remedied by organizational changes; all attempts at such remedies are superficial. They either reject all organizations or they merely replace one form of organization with another. The only effective cures are spiritual. ... I agree that humankind needs a new spiritual basis. If and when a basis is found to heal our present social sickness, a new and more satisfactory form of society can be built on the new and better spiritual foundation. Short of this, I see no possibility of a cure'. (Pramanik1997)

In term of natural function, human being are tasked with two natural roles as vicegerents and as servants. As vicegerents of Allah on earth(The Quran, 2:30) human being have been bestowed with all the spiritual and mental capacity as well as material resources to enable them to live up to their mission effectively. The resources with which Allah has endowed in this world are not unlimited. They are however sufficient to cater for the need and well-being of all if they are utilised in such an efficient, equitable and sustainable manner (Salleh 2000; Sarkawi et al. 2016). The human being are also Allah's servants on earth (The Quran 51:56) thus must obey Him accordingly. The duty of humanity as the servants of Allah oversees the accomplishment of other duties as virtuous agents and God's vicegerents. By this, it is meant that all activities that humanity undertake on their capacity as the vicegerents in utilising and benefiting from the earth and protecting it, and also on their capacity as virtuous agents in enjoining goods and forbidding evils must be in the framework of worshipping Allah as His servants. The recognition and development of human being in both dimension, natural composition and natural function, are crucial to produce the perfect and well balanced human being who understand their roles and responsibilities.

General Principles of Muamalat for Holistic Sustainability

The Meaning of General Principles of Muamalat

The word principle according to dictionaries means a standard or rule of personal conduct or a fundamental or general truth or the essence of something or law concerning a natural phenomenon

or the behavior of a system. (Collins 1995) The principle is said to represent a set of values that orientate and rule the conduct of a particular society. (Wikipedia 2009) It is also a comprehensive and fundamental law, doctrine, or assumption (Merriam Webster 2009) and a primary or essential quality or element determining intrinsic nature or characteristic behavior or a general and fundamental truth that may be used in deciding conduct or choice. (Dictionary.com 2009) Naturally, the word principle as its definitions suggest is something that is all-encompassing applicable to different scenarios and cases under its purview and at the same time rigid, definitive and not subjected to any changes and modification. The word muamalat in this paper is used as an umbrella concept to include all human endeavor apart from faith (*aqidah*) and worship (*ibadah*). This means that it covers all facet of human physical life encompassing political, economic, societal and environmental. Therefore, the phrase "general principle of muamalat" in this article refers to the laws, rules, doctrines and values that dictate, orientate and regulate the behavior and the conduct of humanity in managing their life particularly in respect to their political, economic and societal growth and also to the way they conduct their experience with respect to their environmental consideration as enshrined in the two primary sources of Islam and as elaborated further by the authoritative scholars of Islam in the past and at present. The method and the way how people conduct their muamalat life may vary at different times and places and circumstances, but they must strictly abide by those rigid, definitive and all-encompassing principles that monitor and orientate their conducts and culture.

Principles of Sustainability in Political Life (*fiqh al-siyasah*)

The principles of sustainability in political life here means some principles established in the realm of Islamic muamalat based on the Qur'an and prophetic hadith related to the area of political system and state governance towards nurturing the sustainability of fairness, harmonious and prosperous public life. Islam teaches its followers that a sustainable and harmonious political system must be underlined by some perennial and sacred values and purposes as listed and elaborated below:-

Absolute Sovereignty Belongs to Allah

In Islamic political system, it is maintained that no matter how powerful a government is, it must be subservient to the wills and commands of Allah (al-Mawdudi 1986). The Qur'an says, translated as "*The command rests with none but Allah: He declares the truth, and He is the best of judges*" (*al-An'am 6:57*) This principle set the perimeter of the power and legitimacy of a government. A government does not have absolute sovereignty to determine the policy solely based on its wills and desire. Instead, a government must be submissive to the wills of Allah to protect and safeguard the interest and well being of the public. Although Islam recognises the sanctity of the views of the majority, upon which the legitimacy of a government is established in a democratic system, whenever it goes against the apparent and fundamental moral and ethical values of humanity, even the views of the majority must be abandoned (Muhammad Ra'fat 1986). Likewise, the head of a state cannot do anything according to his whims because besides answerable to the people, he is also answerable to Allah and will be questioned in the day hereafter.

Consultation (Shura)

Consultation (shura) is another central principle in Islamic political system (Al-Qaradawi 1997; Al-Nabhan, t.t.). The Qur'an says when describes some of the qualities of the true believers, translated as *"(those) who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation"* (al-Shura 42:38) This principle refers to the need of a government to consult the public in all critical issues in the administration. A leader must be very open to hear and evaluate any view given by parties concerned before coming to any decision. With this principle, Islam rejects a government in the form of dictatorship and authoritarianism which render absolute legitimacy for a small group of governing elite to determine all policies (Al-Mawdudi 1986). History proves that dictatorship always brings together oppression, tyranny and despotism which finally throw a country into a public anarchy and unrest.

Justice

Justice has been held to be an indispensable ingredient of the Islamic teaching so much so that it is impossible to conceive of an ideal Muslim society where justice is not established. The Qur'an says, translated as *"Allah does command you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due; and when you judge/rule between people that you judge with justice"* (al-Nisa'4:58) Islamic justice is an absolute justice knows no boundary. As long as ones have a lawful right, his/her right will be respected regardless of status, race, skin color or his religious belief. Islam orders its followers to be just even to their enemy. Allah says, meaning *"... and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice, be just, that is next to piety ..."* (al-Ma'dah 5:8) In the context of state administration, Islam has proven the importance of justice in many times in history. The Prophet, for example, had shown this during his administration in Madinah through the proclamation of the Constitution of Madinah (Hamidullah 1975). The full and committed implementation of this principle of justice is believed to be very crucial to ensure the lasting peace and harmony of the people.

Equality

The principle of equality in an Islam political system refers to the situation where all members in the society enjoy the equal right, responsibility, opportunity and space to participate in political activities in the eyes of the law. No individual is born superior to others. Allah says, translated as *"O humankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily, the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you"* (al-Hujurat 49:13. Every individual is free and enjoys equal rights in terms of opportunity to be chosen as leaders and the right to choose leaders, the right to express views and opinions within the perimeters of public interest and shariah principles (Al-Qaradawi 1997). The principles of equality ensures the stability in a society which will, in turn, ensuring the continuity and sustainability of the harmonious and peaceful public life. On the other hand, history has shown that the discriminative regime have caused the collapse of the past civilizations beyond revival.

Principles of Sustainability in Economic Life (*fiqh al-iqtisad*)

Principles of sustainability in economic life refer to the principles established in Islam related to the field of economic life to ensure the development of just, harmonious and sustainable economic prosperity. Among those principles are as follows:-

Absolute Ownership of Wealth and Resources Belongs to Allah

This principle emphasizes the fact that all wealth and natural resources claimed by human beings are owned by Allah. Allah says, translated as *“To Him belongs what is in the heavens and on earth, and all between them, and all beneath the soil”* (Taha 20:6). Human being on the earth are nothing more than the agents of Allah to manage His belonging that He endowed to men on the earth. Together with this endowment comes the responsibility and trust. According to Chapra (1992) this principle entails four things. First, the resources on the earth must be used for the benefit of all and not just for a few. Second, the way how people work to acquire wealth on the earth must be in a rightful manner as allowed by Allah Himself. Third, the way how people dispose of the resources must be following the wills of Allah, i.e. for ‘the well being of not only of one's self and family but also that of others’ and forth no one is authorized to destroy or waste the resources granted by Allah. Therefore, every man who was endowed by Allah must also carry out his responsibility to manage the bounty of Allah in a right manner stipulated by Allah for the sake of the society at large.

Justice

The Qur'an has stressed the establishment of justice and eradication of all forms of injustice as the primary mission of all Allah's messengers. There are no less than a hundred different expressions in the Qur'an embodying the notion of justice, either directly or in a variety of indirect expressions (Chapra 1992). The intense commitment of Islam to justice, including economic justice, demands that all resources at the disposal of human beings are sacred trust from Allah to be distributed justly whereby no one is ignored and left abandoned without even basic necessities. Allah says, meaning *“What Allah has bestowed on His messenger from the people of the townships belongs to Allah, His messenger, kindred, orphan, the needy and the wayfarer; so that it may not make a circuit between the wealthy among you...”* (al-Hashr 59:7)

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the dignity attached to the status of vicegerent implies that need fulfilment must be made through the individual's effort. Accordingly, Islam has emphasised the personal obligation of every Muslim to earn a living to support himself and his family. Therefore, it is the collective obligation of a society to ensure for everyone an equal opportunity to earn an honest living in keeping with his ability and effort. Inequalities can be accepted in a society primarily insofar as they are more or less in proportion to skill, initiative, talent, effort and risk (Chapra 1992). However, extreme or highly skewed inequalities are incompatible with Islamic teachings which emphasise that resources are a gift of God to all human being; thus it should not remain concentrated in a few hands. There are at least four pillars to achieve economic sustainability namely need fulfilment, respectable source of earning, equitable distribution of income and wealth and finally growth and stability.

Modesty

In an Islamic economic system, modesty or moderation is a fundamental value so much so that even the word *al-iqtisad* in the modern Arabic, which is translated as the economy, had been used in the classical Arabic to denote the act of modesty or moderation. The principle of economic modesty as taught by Islam can be seen very clearly in the aspect of expenditure and utilisation of resources. Islam strongly denounces both extremes of economic and financial management. While on the one hand Islam condemns extreme stinginess, on the another, it also condemns excessive spending and extreme generosity (Al-Qaradawi 2002). Allah says meaning, *“make not your hand tied (like a niggard’s) to your neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach, so that you become blameworthy and destitute” (al-Isra’ 17:29)* Instead Islam teaches Muslims to be prudence in their spending, not to be too stingy to the extent that missing and ignoring the bounty of Allah, and at the same time not to be too generous to the extent that spending more than ones limits. In another verse, Allah describes the behaviour of a good servant as those *“who, when they spend are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just (balance) between those (extremes)” (al-Furqan 25:67)*.

Unfortunately, in the era of the domination of materialism and consumerism that we have been through now, people have always been stimulated to spend their wealth more than what they can afford. In short greed has become the underlying philosophy that generating the economic behavior of modern people. This philosophy has caused the unprecedented economic and social turmoil we have been suffering right now. This is the living example of unsustainable financial and economic management underlining by the extreme form of materialism and consumerism culture.

Principles of Sustainability in Social Life (*fiqh al-ijtima’*)

Principles of sustainability in social life refer to some principles exist in Islamic muamalat related to the social development that will ensure the just, harmonious and sustainable social life. Below are some underlining principles related to social life:-

Justice

Justice in social life in Islamic perspective emphasizes on the responsibility to ensure every individual in community get his/her rights in all social needs such as the right to get equal treatment before the law, equal right for education, security, health treatment, religious activities, languages, cultural, way of life and others. All these rights are guaranteed to all individuals in an Islamic social system. Allah says meaning, *“Allah commands justice, the doing of good ... (al-Nahl 16:90)*. Nevertheless, Islam also warned that in enjoying those rights it must also be attached with the sense of responsibility, so that the interest of the individual in a society does not collide with the interest of the public in general (Ramadan 1970). Islamic social justice recognises the fact that human being are of different races, skin colors, cultures, localities, religions and others, but all these differences cannot be the basis for different treatment in term of securing their lawful rights. On the contrary, Islam considers differences as beauty and bounty from Allah to humankind.

Freedom

Islam respects the human freedom. Islam views that human beings are born free from any sins, blames, offences and others. There is a maxim in Islamic muamalat that read “the original status (all human beings) are free from any burden”.(The Mejjelle 1901) The Islamic recognition for human freedom is enshrined in the most authoritative source of Islam itself in which the Qur’an says, meaning “*Let there be no compulsion in religion*” (*al-Baqarah 2:256*). Although Islam maintains that the only true religion revealed by Allah is Islam, it does not, however, force others to accept and embrace it. Every individual is free to choose his/her religion and conduct any social activities as long as it does not pose any threats and harms against others (Ramadan 1970). In this, Islam differs from both sides of extremism namely the totalitarianism which dictates and regulates every aspects of private and public life and also the liberalism that give full liberty and freedom to every individual to choose his private and public life, even sometimes at the cost of human decency, morality, safety and ethics. In short, according to Islam, it is not permissible to restrict the freedom of the individual in any way, unless in exercising that freedom the individual transgresses his legal rights at the expense of the right of others or harms the interest of the public.

Cooperation Towards Good Course

The principle of cooperation towards good courses is a principle of extreme importance in a just and sustainable Islamic social system. Allah says, meaning “... *help you one another in righteousness and piety but help you not one another in sin and rancour...*”(*al-Ma'idah 5:2*) To facilitate the conducive condition for the nurturing of cooperative moods among the people, Islam always urges its followers to maintain their togetherness with the community and not to be estranged from them. For example in observing many types of ritual worships, Islam always urges them to fulfil them together with other people in the congregation. Islam also strongly emphasizes its followers to be kind to their neighbors and other fellow human beings.

In Islam, social responsibility is part of religious duty. In a situation where sinful activities and wrongdoings are rampant, all individuals in that society are obliged to cooperate with each other to tackle the problem (Al-Qaradawi 1997). Likewise in the situation where right and nobility prevails; all individuals are responsible for ensuring that favorable living condition is protected and sustained. If there is any quarrel, dispute or dissatisfaction among the members of the society, it must be resolved amicably and justly and not just let the problem to continue and jeopardise the societal harmony. If any individual of the community is oppressed and treated unjustly, the society, in general, must react to help the oppressed against the oppressor.

Principles of Sustainability in Environmental Management (*fiqh al-bi'ah*)

Principles of sustainability in environmental management mean some principles enshrined in Islamic thoughts and literature that could contribute towards establishing a sustainable, healthy and livable environmental condition. Among those principles that are of significant are as follows:-

Vicegerency (*Khilafiyyah*) and Servant (*'Ubudiyyah*)

The human being in Islamic view are the most glorified beings of all Allah's creatures. Human are considered as Allah's vicegerents on earth to administer, flourish and protect all other creatures (Al-

Qaradawi 2006). The position of vicegerent does not in any way connote the right for the human to exploit the earth according to their whims. The reason is, while on the one hand, they are the vicegerent of Allah on earth, on the another hand, they are also the servant of Allah. This means that while in the horizontal dimension that is to say the relationship between man and his/her surrounding, men are the vicegerents of Allah, in the vertical dimension, on the other hand, that is to say, the relationship between men and Allah, men are the servants of Allah. Accordingly, as the servant of Allah and His vicegerent on earth, men have to be submissive and obedience towards the will of Allah in carrying out their responsibility of protecting and maintaining the balance nature and harmonious inter-relationship between them and their environment and between various elements within the environmental system itself (Nasr 1997). Allah Himself has ordered men to flourish the earth while utilising and take benefit from it and not to exploit and destroy it. Allah says, meaning *"But seek with the(wealth) which Allah has bestowed on you, the home of the hereafter, and not forget your portion in this world, and do good as Allah has been good to you and sought not mischief in the land, for Allah loves not those who make mischief"(al-Qasas 28:77)*

With the correct understanding of the concept and responsibility of vicegerent (*khilafiyah*) and servant (*'ubudiyyah*), men will continuously strive toward utilizing and benefiting from the earth as the bounty of Allah in the best and most sustainable way and at the same time maintaining and protecting the well-balanced nature of the earth as Allah Himself has created it in the most balanced way.

The right to take benefit (*al-Taskhir*)

The principle of *al-taskhir* refers to the privileges endowed and responsibilities trusted by Allah to men to flourish, utilize and take benefit from environment and all creatures available on earth in the best possible way. With that, every element within the environmental system can continue playing their roles to flourish and keep harmonious and well-balanced nature of the earth. The concept of *al-taskhir* has continuously been confused with the meaning of conquest and exploitation of nature which connotes the privilege to misuse, abuse, manipulate and mistreat the environment as the modern and secular science understand it. While *al-taskhir* implies utilizing and taking benefit from the environment while protecting and flourishing it, exploiting environment certainly implies the act of utilizing it without proper regard given to protect and maintain it the way it supposed to be, thus disrupting the natural order and dynamism of the environmental system (Nasr 1997). Allah says, meaning *"Do you not see that Allah has subjected to you all things in the heaven and on earth and has made His bounties flow to you in exceeding measure both seen and unseen,? ..."(Luqman 31:20)*

Universal Justice (*al-'Adalah al-'Alamiyyah*)

Islam is a religion revealed to bring justice and kindness to all Allah's creatures in the entire system of the universe. Allah says, meaning *"We sent you(Muhammad) not, but as a mercy for all creatures"(al-Anbiya'21:107)* Therefore human being as the vicegerent of Allah in the universe that have been trusted with the responsibility to administer the universe, must ensure that this universal justice is implemented and carried out judiciously and fairly to all creatures. A true Muslim must believe that any form of injustice and cruelty against any creature will be answerable to Allah and

that oppressed creatures will be given opportunity to demand justice and retribution in Allah's court of justice in the hereafter. In this sense, there are many reports from the prophet which warned Muslims not to be cruel and brutal toward even a very tiny species of animal because they will be resurrected in the hereafter demanding for justice against the person who acted cruelly toward them in this world. This implies that in term of protecting and conserving the environment, the human being are not allowed to destroy environment whimsically because it is tantamount to acting unjustly to the creatures and they will be questioned for that by Allah.

Establishing Well being and Preventing Evil (*Hifz al-Maslahah* and *Dar' al-Mafsadah*)

Establishing well being and avoiding evil or harms are among the primary objectives of Islam. In this sense Allah says, meaning *"You are the best of people evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah ..."*(*Al 'Imran* 3:110). In respect of their relationship with the environment, the human being as Allah vicegerent on earth must ensure that the environment is always appropriately managed and prevent all kinds of mismanagement and abuse. Although men are allowed to utilise and take benefit from the environment to fulfill their needs, it must be conducted in a manner that is full of responsibility and wisdom and not in the form of exploiting and abusing it.

Well Balanced (*al-Tawazun*)

The Qur'an tells us that Allah has created the universe in the most balanced way. Allah says, meaning *"And the firmament has He raised high, and He has set up the balance (in the nature); In order that you may not transgress (due) balance; So establish weight with justice and fall not short in the balance"*(*al-Rahman* 55:7-9) Therefore Islam teaches Muslims to protect the right balance in the way they behave and in everything they do. Islam urges Muslims to strike a right balance between the need to protect the personal interest and the public interest, between the interest in this world and interest in the world hereafter, between the physical needs and spiritual needs, between the present interest and the future interest and between the need to achieve the physical progress and protecting environment. Therefore, in the process of improving physical development, men have to think also about its impact on the environment. The balanced nature of the earth is very crucial to ensure every component of the earth can fulfill their functions and roles effectively according to the law of nature as stipulated by Allah. It is essential that the roles of every component of the earth not to be disturbed and impaired by men (Al-Qaradawi 2006).

Compassion (*Ihsan*)

Islam teaches its people to behave kindly and full of compassion in their interaction with all other creatures (Al-Qaradawi 2006). The need to be compassion and kind when dealing with other creatures is so apparent in many Quranic verses and prophetic hadith. Allah says, meaning *"... be compassionate, for Allah loves those who are compassion"*(*al-Baqarah* 2:195). The prophet says, meaning *"Allah has obligated ihsan(benevolent/compassion) upon Himself, therefore, if you have to kill animals, do it most compassionately, ..."*(narrated in Muslim). Ihsan or compassion as mentioned in the two sources connotes two meanings, namely to be diligent and careful and to be caring, gentle and benevolent. Both definitions apply to the contexts of the interaction between men and the

environment. In the process of utilizing the environment for their progress and development, they must treat it with diligent, caring and benevolent and abstain from behaving recklessly and ruthlessly. For example, the Prophet once reminds Muslims to be gentle and compassion when slaughtering animals for their food. This implies that if the animals are not to be slaughtered, they must be compassionately treated and any form of cruelty and harm are strictly prohibited. The diagram below (figure 1) simplifies the relationship between.

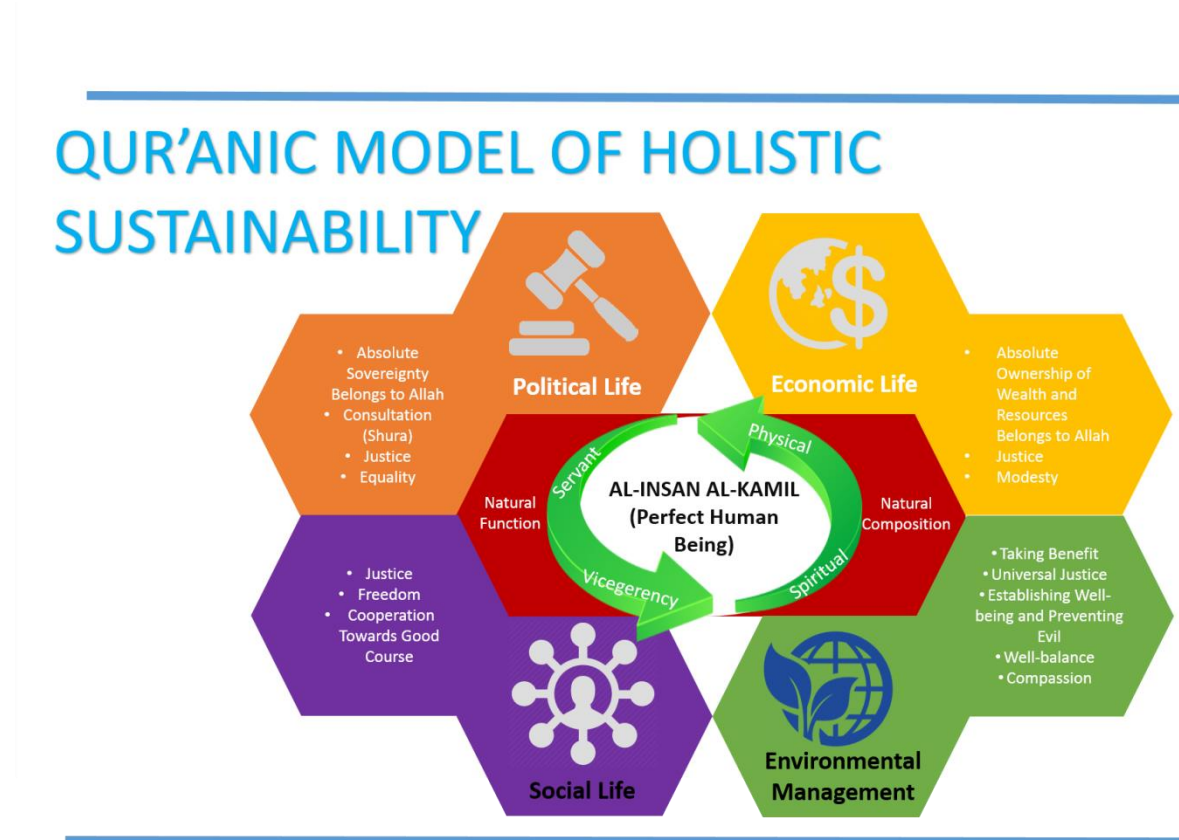


Figure 1. Illustration depicting the relationship between the human’s natural components and function and the muamalat principles for a holistic sustainability.

Conclusion

To conclude, this study discovers that due to some serious shortcomings, the conventional solution proposed to overcome the gloomy picture of the current socio economic and environmental scenario so far has not been successful enough. Instead, this study establishes that in order to achieve a desirable holistic sustainable development, human beings as the main agent of development must be fully developed in order to have the well balanced human nature in both physical and spiritual health which constitute the basic components of human formation. The well balanced human beings will be able to carry out their duties and responsibilities as the main agent of development or in the word of the Qur’an, the vicegerent and the servant. The stability in both spiritual and physical elements and the complete and sincere fulfillment of their natural roles as vicegerent and servant

will give rise to the perfect human being or insan kamil. This paper furthermore argues that only perfect human being or insan kamil can effectively manage and bring about holistic development with the guidance from the muamalat principles enshrined in the Qur'an. In short, this study establishes that in order to achieve the real and comprehensive sustainability, a new paradigm and worldview must be instilled in humanity. Firstly it must be made clear about the basic elements of humanity such as the identity, nature, roles and ultimate destination of the humanity. Secondly, The Qur'an as the main source of Islam, offers some guidance and wisdoms that ready to be digested and benefitted for the interest of human being as a whole.

Acknowledgement

This study was conducted under the support of School of Humanities Universiti Sains Malaysia Penang.

Corresponding Author

Atikullah Hj Abdullah, Islamic Studies Section, School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Email: atik@usm.my

References

- Agwan, A.R. (1997). *Islam and the Environment*. Kuala Lumpur: Synergy Book International.
- Ahmad, K. (1980). *Studies in Islamic Economics*. Leicester: Islamic Foundation.
- Al-Mawdudi, A. al-A. (1986). *Islamic Law and Constitution*. Lahore: Islamic Publication.
- Al-Nabhan, M.F. (1974). *Nizam al-Hukm fi al-Islam*. Kuwait: University of Kuwait
- Al-Qaradawi, Y. (1997). *Min Fiqh al-Dawlah fi al-Islam*. Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq.
- Al-Qaradawi, Y. (2002). *Dawr al-Qiyam wa al-Akhlaq fi al-Iqtisad al-Islamiyy*. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah.
- Al-Qaradawi, Y. (2006). *Ri'ayat al-Bi'ah fi al-Shari'ah al-Islamiyyah*. Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq
- Al-Roubaie, A. (2002). *Globalization and The Muslim World*. Shah Alam: Malta Jaya.
- Ansari, M.I. (1994). Islamic Perspective on Sustainable Development. *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 11(3), 394-401.
- Brundtland's Report (1987), *World Commission on Environment and Development*.
- Chapra, M.U.(1992). *Islam and the Economic Challenge*. Leicester: The Islamic Foundation.
- Collins Concise Dictionary* (New- Revised Edition). (1995). England: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Ghazali, A. (1990). *Development: An Islamic Perspective*. Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications.
- Hamidullah, M. (1975). *The First Written Constitution in the World*. Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers.
- Hasan, Z. (2006). Sustainable Development From an Islamic Perspective: Meaning, Implications and Policy Concerns. *J.KAU: Islamic Econ.*, 19(1), 3-18
- Hove, H. (2004). Critiquing Sustainable Development : A Meaningful Way of Mediating the Development Impasse, *Undercurrent*, 1(1), 48-54.
- Jusoff, K., and Abu Samah, S.A., (2011). Environmental Sustainability : What Islam Propagates, *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 12, 46-53.

- Khalid, F. (1992). *Islam and Ecology*. London: Cassel.
- Khan, N. A., (2001). Sustainable Development & Islamic Ethics: A Primer on Conceptual Linkages, *Journal of Islamic Administration*, 4-5(1), 27-36.
- Mohamed, Y. (1996). *Fitra: The Islamic Concept of Human Nature*. London: Taha Publishers.
- Moten, A.R. (1997). Preface. In Pramanik, A.H. *Human Development With Dignity*. Kuala Lumpur: Cahaya Pantai.
- Pramanik, A.H. (1997). *Human Development With Dignity*. Kuala Lumpur: Cahaya Pantai.
- Ramadan, S. (1970). *Islamic Law: Its Scope and Equity*. n.p.
- Salleh, K.O. (2000). *Peranan Malaysia Dalam Konteks Pembangunan Mampan*. In Abdul Majeed. A.B. (Eds.) *Pengurusan Bijak Alam Sekitar*. Kuala Lumpur: Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia
- Sarkawi, A.A., Abdullah, A., Md. Dali, N., (2016). The Concept Of Sustainability From The Islamic Perspectives. *International Journal of Business, Economics and Law*, 9(5), 112-116.
- Sarvestani, A.A., & Shahvali, M., (2008). Environmental Ethics : Toward an Islamic Perspective, *American-Eurasian J. Agric. & Environ. Sci.*, 3(4), 609–617.
- Shaharir, M. Z. (2012). A New Paradigm of Sustainability. *Journal of Sustainable Development*, 5(1), 91-99.
- The Mejelle* (1902). Turkey: Government Printing Press.
- 'Uthman, M.R. (1986). *Riyasat al-Dawlah fi al-Fiqh al-Islamiyy*. Dubai: Dar al-Qalam.