


Chapter 14

Public Policy and Sustainable Waste Management: The Concept of Waste in Islam in Relation to Sustainability

Fathin Awang Mat Japar

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-6392-8459>

Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Brunei

Emil Ali

Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Brunei

Hamizah Haidi

Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Brunei

ABSTRACT

Public policy has an effect on diverse aspects of the public domain, including the domain of waste management, which falls under SDG12: sustainable consumption and production. This chapter discovers and discusses the definition of the waste management concept derived from the Qur'ān and Sunnah (Prophetic traditions) from the ground up, beginning with the concept of waste itself. It is found that the concept of waste in Islam comprises an interdisciplinary approach, thus leading to the understanding of the concept of waste management in Islam that incorporates sustainability elements and integration of multiple dimensions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Waste management studies serve as an imperative source for the latest data, framework models and actionable strategies for achieving sustainable development goals. The reasons behind the need and rise of these studies are also significant in terms of how the research will unfold and provide emergent solutions for the ubiquitous impacts of excessive waste generation and mismanagement to the respective domains

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of priority particularly the sustainable development goals and the environmental health missions pursued by a diverse demographic of stakeholders and affected groups. The different objectives underlying different worldviews have an influence on the research outcomes, such that scientists that are after the sustaining of human development on this planet would have a different set of focus compared to scholars who are pursuing the higher divine objectives with matters of the hereafter in mind when dealing with waste management research. There is a substantial number of research studies being conducted on the management of waste in broad, but not as many of these studies on waste management are premised on the worldview of the Islamic faith. Oftentimes, there is a paradigm contradiction occurring in the studies where the supposed Islamic take on waste management still approaches the concept of waste and its management based on non-Islamic worldviews. While it is logical and necessary to establish the concept of waste on the tangible lived reality, an understanding derived from Islamic teaching on the concept of waste would be a significant contribution to the research if one claims that a waste management framework is founded upon a true Islamic worldview.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews existing literature surrounding the conventional understanding of sustainability, waste management and governance of waste management. There exist the memorable definitions of sustainability throughout many disciplines that are somewhat similar yet distinct, and there are also the other less popular yet significant definitions of sustainability derived from other paradigms of knowledge. Among the most prominent definitions of sustainability found in literature searches are those pertaining to health and medical disciplines, such as the sustainability of health interventions; sustainable growth in the world of entrepreneurship; and the field of sustainable development, which is the scope of this chapter. Inconsistencies in the sustainability definition may endure even within a discipline (Moore et al., 2017). On the other hand, the definition reflected in the 1987 Brundtland Report was more frequently cited in publications on sustainable development (Johnston et al., 2007). This definition was revised in 2006 to add comprehensive coverage in its specifications, particularly as “a long-term vision for sustainability in which economic growth, social cohesion and environmental protection go hand in hand and are mutually supporting” (EUR-Lex Glossary of Summaries, n.d.). The three pillars of sustainability (or more specifically, of sustainable development), namely the environmental, economic, and social aspects, appear to be the focus of the definitions given. Other similar definitions of sustainability are mentioned in the works of many (Morse et al., 2013; Office of Sustainability, n.d.), and these popular ‘definitions’ are construed in the sense that they are in the form of envisioned goals or anticipated outcomes of sustainability rather than definitions of sustainability in terms of its fundamental actuality. Meanwhile, there are many who reject the search for an objective and conceptual definition of sustainability in favour of a more Panglossian approach that suggests development in the absence of a universal definition (Owens, 2003).

Another interesting take on the sustainability definition is that of Tainter (vlada, 2012) which is “an active condition of problem-solving.” This is further defined in detail in one of his lectures as follows: “maintaining something at a desired condition, usually what’s valued in people’s life; it is sustaining something that people value.” (Ibid.) He emphasised that the act of sustaining or maintaining something was undertaken in order to achieve a certain condition that is valued from a human perspective, arguably regardless of the utter and total value outside of our restricted human understanding. His critical assessment of ‘sustainability’ stands on a more realistic foundation as his view of sustainability also

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