

# BUILDING HEAVEN ON EARTH: ISLAMIC VALUES IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*Sistem perancangan bandar di dunia Islam masakini memang tidak dapat diragui telah terpengaruh dan digayakan mengikut model bandar Barat: suatu model yang tidak mengambil kira nilai-nilai Islam dan kebudayaan. Sistem perbandaran yang kita dapati sekarang ini tidak lagi mengarahkan bandar-bandar tersebut ke arah utopia yang sepatutnya, tetapi sebaliknya akan mempercepatkan lagi kemerosotan beberapa bandar sebagai suatu sistem yang bertenaga lagi berfungsi. Kajian ini cuba untuk mengemukakan suatu premis yang mengatakan bahawa pembangunan bandar yang didasarkan kepada nilai-nilai Islam dan perlaksanaannya akan membolehkan warganya mendaulatkan cara hidup Islam dan mengharmonikan kewujudan mereka di antara manusia, alam semulajadi dan teknologi.*

## THE CRISIS OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Rapid urbanization throughout the world is one of the most important phenomena in recent world history. The term urbanization refers to a two-phase process involving, firstly, the movement of people from rural to urban places where they engage in primarily non-rural functions or occupations, and secondly, the change in their life-styles from rural to urban with its associated values, attitudes and behaviours.<sup>2</sup> Urbanism is a broader concept which is used to refer to all aspects (political, economic, social, etc.) of the urban way of life. Unlike urbanization, urbanism is not a process of urban growth, but rather the end result of urbanization.

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<sup>1</sup>This article is a revised version of a paper presented at the Fifth Malaysia-Singapore Forum held in Singapore from 11-13th December 1995.

<sup>2</sup>Brunn, S.D. & Williams, J.F., *Cities of the world*. (New York : Harper and Row, 1983).

Over the past three decades, cities in the Muslim world have been growing at an unprecedented rate. Major cities have recorded rapid population growth attributed to both natural population increases and rural-to-urban migration movements. By the year 2000, twenty-one cities, seventeen of which will be in the developing countries, will have more than 10 million inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> Some of the more common problems manifested in these cities include the lack of housing, inadequate urban services, traffic chaos and rapid environmental degradation. There is, justifiably, concern that rapid urbanization in these cities is bringing about the deterioration of the overall quality of life for its citizens.

An overview of urban problems has been excellently discussed elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> It is suggested that the phenomenon of overcrowding lies at the root of the urban problems. Overcrowding implies the notion of too many people occupying too little space and competing for too few services and jobs. Large numbers of people working earn so little that they remain essentially in poverty.

With too many people in the cities, city governments are hard pressed to provide all the human services that the residents need. It is the poorest people who suffer the most to the point where they cannot afford decent shelter for themselves and their families. Most cities of the world have slums and/or squatter settlements. These areas are often neglected and as such they are often areas of health and socio-economic problems. Basic human needs such as proper sewage systems, water for cooking and washing, educational, health care and recreational facilities are sadly lacking in many cities. Another obvious effect of overcrowding is produced in part by the appearance of the automobile society in most large cities of the world. Traffic congestion is affecting the efficient movement of people and goods within the cities and bringing about environmental degradation in terms of air pollution, excessive noise and deterioration of the landscape.

However, as some analysts would argue, the urban crisis is not merely a matter of too many people concentrated in one place.<sup>5</sup> In other words, the problems of the city cannot be viewed simply in terms of over-populated cities. Duhl asserted that cities throughout the world deeply reflect the values and attitudes of their society.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Bartone, C. et al., *Towards environmental strategies for cities*. (Washington, D.C. : World Bank Publications, 1994).

<sup>4</sup>Brunn & Williams, *op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup>Kassam, S., Walji, H. & Hassan, M., "The wretched of the city," *Afkar Inquiry*, Vol.4 No.3 (1987), p. 26.

<sup>6</sup>Duhl, L.J., "The mind of the city," *Afkar Inquiry*, Vol.4 No.3 (1987), p.38.

The dilemma of Westernization/modernization has meant that cities try to modernize their economies at all cost, to industrialize and raise the overall standard of living which often resulted in a conflict with their traditional cultural values and ways of life. Bianco has suggested that western models of development have proved totally inappropriate to Muslim cities.<sup>7</sup> The most salient features of towns in the Muslim world today are their congestion and urban decay. Where once the *medina* existed, new towns have emerged based on the model of Western cities; a model that has little or no sympathy with the culture or the environment of Muslim countries. With the advent of the automobile, buildings had to be demolished to make way for the car, and the modern Muslim city became largely then an expression of its road network.

In order to avert a worsening crisis, we need to return to the earlier origins of the city. The city, in its earlier meanings, had many functions that were integrated into a whole belief system and cosmology. The Muslim world, for one, reflects the importance of religious beliefs in the cities it created. The great mosque, the *jami*, is almost always built in the centre of the *medina*. The fullness of the Muslim communities built around the mosque reflected the importance of daily life in the Muslim belief system. The traditional *medina* creates an atmosphere that is in harmony with environmental dictates and one which simultaneously fulfills the cultural requirements of its society.

This society is built around the religion of Islam.

## TAWHIDIC WORLD-VIEW AND DERIVED VALUES

Islam is the primordial religion of man - the *din al-fitrah*. Islam, an Arabic word, connotes submission, surrender and obedience. As a religion, Islam stands for complete submission and obedience to Allah. The revealed Word of God, the Qur'an, is the embodiment of Truth, and sets the basis for an Islamic way of life. The Qur'an provides basic guidelines and principles for human transactions and a theoretical framework for the parameters of Muslim civilization. The *Sunnah*, or the way of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) is regarded as Islam in action. The *Sunnah* consists of what the Prophet had said, what he did and what he approved of or

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<sup>7</sup>Stefano Bianco, "Traditional Muslim cities and Western planning ideology: An outline of structural conflicts", in Ismail Serageldin and Samir el-Sadek (eds.), *The Arab City, Proceedings of a Symposium*, Medina, 1981.

allowed. Together, the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* are the Absolute Reference Frame (ARF) of the Muslim civilization.<sup>8</sup>

At this juncture, it is important to stress that Islam is not a religion in the 'Western' understanding of the term. Islam is at once a faith and a way of life, a religion and a social order, a doctrine and a code of conduct, a set of values and principles and a social movement to realize them in history.<sup>9</sup> As a holistic system Islam touches every aspect of human endeavour. Islamic ethics and values permeate all human activity. Hence Muslims' beliefs and value structures shape our relationship with nature, with each other and the life-styles we lead. Values are those concepts and ideals which move individual and collective behaviour of man in the transactions of life.<sup>10</sup> To Sardar, values are constituent facts of social behaviour: they motivate individuals and communities and provide society with criteria for evaluation and a standard for social behaviour. Islamic values are aligned with the nature of man, and are conducive to his moral and spiritual evolution.

In Islam, ethics are inseparable from religion and are built entirely upon it. Any discussion of ethics in Islam must, of necessity, start with an exposition of the concept of *tawhid*, the foundation stone of Islam. *Al-tawhid* is the conviction and witnessing that "there is no god but Allah". To Ismail al-Faruqi, this brief statement carries yet the richest meaning in the whole of Islam.<sup>11</sup> All the diversity, wealth and history, culture and learning, wisdom and civilization of Islam is compressed in this pronouncement. As an ethical rule, *tawhid* dictates the acceptance of God as the only source of all values; not to do this would lead to *shirk*, the negation of *tawhid*, which is the cardinal sin in Islam.

*Al-tawhid* affirms that God created man to the end of worshipping and serving Him. However, the ethic of Islam is not of asceticism. Islam ordered its adherents to cultivate their faculties; to understand themselves, nature, and the world in which they live; to satisfy their craving for food, shelter, comfort and reproduction; to realize balance and harmony in their relations with men and nature; to transform the

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<sup>8</sup>Ziauddin Sardar, *The Future of Muslim Civilization*. (Kuala Lumpur: Pelanduk Publications, 1988), p.14.

<sup>9</sup>Abul A'la Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding Islam*. (Leicester, U.K.: The Islamic Foundation, 1980)

<sup>10</sup>Ziauddin Sardar, *op.cit.*, p.27.

<sup>11</sup>Ismail Raji al Faruqi, *Al-Tawhid: Its implications for thought and life*. (Herndon, Virginia: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1992)

earth into a producing orchard, a fertile farm and a beautiful garden, to express their understanding in works of aesthetic beauty. Islam regarded every act, however little, as capable of adding to the total value of the cosmos, as an act of worship, of service to God, provided it is entered into for His sake. As a conscious believer, such satisfaction is for him a 'taste' of the joys of Paradise to come.

*Al-tawhid* is the acknowledgement that Allah alone is God. This means that Allah is the ultimate source of goodness, of all value. Allah gives the good its goodness, value its valueness. No commandment in Islam would hold without *al-tawhid*. The whole religion itself, man's obligations to serve Allah, to fulfill His commandments and observe His prohibitions would fall the moment *al-tawhid* is violated. For, to violate *al-tawhid* is to doubt that Allah is the One and Only God. That *al-tawhid* is the most important commandment of God is evidenced by God's promise to forgive all sins but the violation of *al-tawhid*. To hold on to the principle of *al-tawhid* is therefore the corner stone of all piety.

Furthermore, to acknowledge that there is no god but Allah is to recognize Him as sole Creator, Lord and Judge of the world. It follows from this witnessing that man was created for a purpose, since God does not work in vain; and that this realization of the divine will as it pertains to this world in which human life finds its theatre. This commits the Muslim to take time and space seriously, since it is his fulfillment of the divine patterns pertinent to that space and that time in which he stands that constitutes his felicity, or, alternatively, his damnation. *Falah* is the genuine transformation of the earth into the garden of God (the real meaning of the Qur'anic concept of *isti'mar al ard* (reconstruction of the earth), and of mankind fulfilling the patterns of God.

The ethical arm of Islamic doctrine teaches that nature was created as a theatre for man, a 'field' in which to grow and prosper, to enjoy God's bounty and in doing so to prove oneself ethically worthy, as evidenced in verse 18:7 of the Qur'an "We have created what is on earth as ornament, an enjoyment to you, that We may test who among you are the best in conduct". The implications of this, as testified by Ismail al-Faruqi, are that:

- i. Nature is not man's property but God's. Like a good land-tenant, man ought to take care of his Master's property. The right of usufruct does not entitle him to destroy nature, or to so exploit it as to upset and ruin its ecological balance. As steward of the earth man is supposed at death to hand over his trust in God in a better state than it was when he receives it.

ii. The order of nature is subject to man, who can bring to it such changes as he wills. All creation is 'for' man and awaits his usufruct of it. Its disposal is utterly at his discretion. His judgement is the only efficacious instrument of intervention. But nothing relieves him of responsibility for the whole of creation.

iii. In his usufruct and enjoyment of nature, man is enjoined to act morally, for theft and cheating, coercion and monopoly, hoarding and exploitation, egotism and insensitivity to the needs of others, are unworthy of him as God's vicegerent and are therefore strictly forbidden. Islam frowns upon extravagance and forbids wasteful and ostentatious consumption.

There are three major principles affecting the practice, activity or life of an Islamic society and they are the principles of universalism, totalism and freedom. To elaborate, this would mean that:

i. Under Islam, there can be no discrimination between man and man. The unity of God implies that value is value for all. Value, or the moral imperative, is therefore one for all.

ii. The second practical implication of *al-tawhid* for society may be defined as the application of Islamic society's determination to every department, aspect and concern of human living. The will of God includes all goodness wherever it is found. Islamic jurisprudence and ethics have conveniently classified human activities into five classes: obligatory, prohibited, recommended, recommended against, and neutral.

iii. The third practical implication is the principle of responsibility. Man has been endowed with the freedom to realize or violate the divine will and thus enabling him to be responsible for his deeds.

## IMAGES OF THE CITY

The city has thus come to be regarded as the focus of all society's problems. Two opposing views were offered regarding the relationship between spatial and social order.<sup>12</sup> According to the first, the relationship between spatial and social order

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<sup>12</sup>Gosling, D. & Maitland, B., *Concepts of urban design*. (London : Academy Editions, 1984)

is so compelling that we may design an ideal society by designing an ideal city form for it, while the second views that the relationship is so weak as to make architectural and urban design solutions irrelevant to the solution of social issues.

Gosling and Maitland suggested a broad classification consisting of five perceptions of the nature of the city. These perceptions are:

**i. The city as process**

In this, all urban design solutions are obliged to recognize the power of economic forces in shaping the city. The economic context provides then a crucial parameter for urban design. Design proposals, seen as containers or channels for a flux of economic activity, thus tends to be preoccupied with change, with the patterns which future growth may adopt and with stimulating activity in preferred configurations.

**ii. The city as a technical device**

The most explicit generators of public space in the city have always been the patterns of circulation which have sustained its activities. With the growing size of the metropolis, these circulation systems have become more remote. Circulation, however, is not the only engineering problem presented by the city. Earlier fears of technical collapse due to atmospheric pollution or inadequate sanitation and fresh water supplies have now been joined by misgivings over the huge energy consumption of cities. The implications that arise from this perspective is the adoption of large-scale engineering solutions to these problems.

**iii. The city as an expression of social order**

The expression 'social order' means the system of values or principles which govern the life of a society. Urban design is seen as an attempt to find an appropriate form to sustain a social programme. For example, the Soviet Union has provided one of the most extensive test beds of New Town planning. A huge investment in New Towns has occurred in the context of Marxist theory and that 'the elimination of the socio-economic and cultural distinctions between town and country will be one of the greatest results of Communist construction'.<sup>13</sup>

**iv. The city as a resolution of design problems**

Although the rationale for building New Towns in England has been expressed as the desire to 'relieve pressure on metropolitan areas or provide a stimulus to local

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<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p.79.

development', the policy has also been accompanied by the desire to break new ground in design terms.<sup>14</sup>

#### v. The city as a coherent experience

It is claimed that the original impetus to consider the question of urban design lay in the unresolved and unsatisfactory visual or formal quality of our urban environment which seems to act as the starting point for many investigations. Most urban designers want to make a contribution to the reduction of visual squalor, monotony or illegibility in our cities.

In contrast to these perceptions by Western analysts, the vision of the Good City, as delineated by al-Farabi (considered as the 'Philosopher of the City') in his *Fi mabadi' ara' ahl al-madinat al-fadila* ('On the principles of the opinions of the inhabitants of the Good City') is the first serious attempt to harmonize Greek political and civilisational philosophy with the Islamic ideal of the shari'a-state. The Good City, according to al-Farabi, is the one where 'men come together and co-operate with the aim of becoming virtuous, performing noble activities, and attaining happiness'.<sup>15</sup> Al-Farabi's theosophical model of the ideal city extolled urban society. Following Plato, he asserted that town communities are the best of the perfect societies where knowledge may be attained and justice and order may prevail. Al-Farabi was influenced by the fact that Islamic civilization was pre-eminently an urban civilization and that for the faithful execution of the injunctions and duties of the Shariah an urban environment was (is) necessary.

If al-Farabi is 'the philosopher of the city' in Islam, Ibn Khaldun is indisputably its foremost sociologist. The City, in Ibn Khaldun's thought, is no longer an image of perfect order: it is quite simply an urban settlement, distinguished only by its size and the peculiarity of its civic institutions. Ibn Khaldun viewed the city as an 'organism' which had its growth, development and decline.<sup>16</sup> The life cycle of a city goes on until it produces luxury and urban culture to its fullest extent. After attaining its sedentary culture, city life tends to slide downward. Consequently, there is a decline in public morality and religion. When the decline accelerates, the civilization of the city falls to ruins.

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<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p.93.

<sup>15</sup>Manzoor, S.P., "Beyond city and civilization", *Afkar Inquiry*, Vol.4 No.3 (1987), p.32.

<sup>16</sup>Beg, M.A.J., *Concepts of Civilization*. (Kuala Lumpur: M.A.J. Beg, 1982), p.40.



## NOTION OF DEVELOPMENT UNDER ISLAMIC FRAMEWORK

The ideas of Jafar Shaykh Idris and Khurshid Ahmad have given the notion of development within an Islamic framework a completely new meaning.<sup>17</sup> Jafar Shaykh Idris viewed that, within this framework of Islamic way of development, material and spiritual aspects of life are complementary. To be able to live the good life of devotion to God, we have to make the best use of the material resources of our world.

Ahmad's analysis is much more conceptual. He argues that the philosophic foundation of the Islamic approach to development is based on four fundamental concepts: *tawhid* (the unity of God); *rububiyyah* (divine arrangements for nourishment, sustenance and directing things towards their perfection); *khalifah* (man's role as the trustee of God on earth); and *tazkiyah* (purification plus growth). Ahmad's understanding of *tazkiyah* leads him to identify five essential features of development within an Islamic framework:

- i. The Islamic concept of development has a comprehensive character and includes moral, spiritual and material aspects. Development becomes a goal and value-orientated activity, devoted to the optimisation of human well-being in all these dimensions. The welfare that Islam seeks extend to the life in the hereafter and there is no conflict between the two.
- ii. The focus for development effort and the heart of the development process is man.
- iii. Economic development is a multi-dimensional activity, more so in an Islamic framework.
- iv. Over-involvement with quantitative changes has led to the neglect of the qualitative aspects of development. Islam would try to rectify this imbalance.
- v. Among the dynamic principles of social life Islam has particularly emphasized two: first, the optimal utilisation of resources that God has endowed to man and his physical environment, and secondly, their equitable use and distribution and promotion of all human relationships on the basis of Right and Justice. Islam commands the value of *shukr* (thankfulness to God by

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<sup>17</sup>Ziauddin Sardar, *Islamic Futures*. (Kuala Lumpur: Pelanduk Publications, 1988), p.267.

availing of His blessings) and *adl* (justice) and condemns the disvalues of *kufr* (denial of God and His blessings) and *zulm* (injustice).

To Sardar however, as far as the Muslim societies are concerned, development is a dead concept. Muslim societies have no need to 'develop'; they need to operationalize *tazkiyah* in all its multi-dimensional facets.<sup>18</sup> In the Qur'an, *tazkiyah* has been given the connotations of growth. The idea of growth through purification is particularly unique to Islam. The prime goal of growth through *tazkiyah* is meeting the basic needs of Muslim societies. The five needs are physical and mental health; shelter and housing; recreation and community involvement; security, dignity and freedom; and, education and training. Growth through *tazkiyah* aims to create an infrastructure to meet the above basic needs.

The concept of community development is expected to play an important role in developing alternative Muslim futures. When we speak of a community, we speak of three basic social and institutional units: the family, the mosque and the neighbourhood. These are the central institutions of Muslim community whatever their space-time locations; and community awareness begins by recognizing that only by strengthening and developing these basic units would the Muslims have a better future.

In all Muslim societies, the family (used here in the widest sense to mean the whole kinship as a key social organization) dominates all other social institutions. We must ensure that the Muslim family becomes even more effective in carrying out the functions which are essential for the maintenance of Muslim society. After the family, the mosque needs to be developed as a strong social institution. In the early Muslim community, besides being the venue for congregational prayers, the mosque performed a number of other important functions. In Muslim town planning for instance, the neighbourhood with the Friday mosque as a central pivot around which all activities turned, was a basic planning unit.

## **OPERATIONALIZING ISLAMIC VALUES IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

There are a host of Islamic concepts and values which limit the extent and nature of human activity.<sup>19</sup> There are many positive values such as *iqtisad*

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<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p.272.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p.200.

(moderation), *adl* (justice), *ihsan* (kindness), *amanah* (honesty), *infaq* (spending to meet social obligations), *sabr* (patience) and *istislah* (public interest). Negative values include *zulm* (tyranny), *bukhl* (miserliness), *ikhtinaz* (hoarding of wealth) and *israf* (extravagance). In short, any human activity acted out within the positive parameters is *halal* (praiseworthy) and conversely, *haram* (blameworthy) if it is within the circumference of negative values.

Sardar considered that what is Islamic about the Islamic environment is the atmosphere they create: an atmosphere that encourages the remembrance of Allah, motivates behaviour according to the dictates of the *Shariah* and promotes the values inherent in the matrix of key Qur'anic concepts of *tawhid*, *khilafah*, *amanah*, *halal*, *haram*, *adl* (justice), *istihsan* (preference for the better) and *istislah* (public welfare).<sup>20</sup> This atmosphere is to be created by the totality of the system that produces the built environment: the principles of design, the methodology of architecture, the materials used in the construction, the form and structure of the buildings and their relationship with the natural environment, and the attitudes, motives and the world-view of the people involved in the system.

The City of Islam is then a concrete expression of the belief and action structure of the ideal Islamic society. Gulzar Haider undertook a conceptual formulation of an Islamic city and the design principles guiding the creation of an Islamic built environment.<sup>21</sup> In Haider's conception of the Islamic city, *al-tawhid* and *khilafah* dictate that the Islamic city be a city of trusteeship and accountability. It is a city that nurtures the attitude that every act has consequences which could be harmful or beneficial, and it produces an environment that establishes *adl* in all aspects of human endeavour. It is a city of ecological harmony that reflects the beauty (*jamal*) of nature and promotes the awareness of nature (*khilqat*) as signs (*ayat*) of God, as a book of knowledge (*ilm*) to be understood, and as a benevolent trust (*amanah*). Islamic city promotes an active, dynamic, goal-orientated environment which maintains a sustained struggle (*jihad*) for values inherent in the matrix of concepts that give it its unique character.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p.233.

<sup>21</sup>Haider, S.G., "Habitat and values in Islam", in Ziauddin Sardar (ed.), *The Touch of Midas*. (Kuala Lumpur: Pelanduk Publications, 1988), p.170.

<sup>22</sup>Ziauddin Sardar, *Islamic futures, op. cit.*, p.235.

Haider argues that the design principles which amalgamate the ideals of an Islamic environment are based on three formative values: environmental sensibility, morphological integrity and symbolic clarity. Environmental sensibility implies that the design of Islamic environment must show respect for natural topography such as land form, water bodies and woodlands and the climate to which it must respond. Morphological integrity requires a sensitivity towards size, scale and quality, maintenance of private and public intimacy and an appreciation of human scale. Symbolic clarity requires respect for tradition and culture. It constitutes a challenge to create an urban environment that provokes experiences and phenomenon that constitutes an Islamic expression of life.

Islamic design principles imply respect for natural topography especially land form, water bodies, trees, orientation and visual focii. Appropriate design also implies respect for climate as the prime reason for enclosure. Rights to sun and air are to be treated as sacredly as rights to life and liberty. The design principles of *ĕgardens*, flowers and pools<sup>1</sup> provide reflections on the phenomenon of growth and decay which are essential to the development of the human mind. Technology is seen as far from being value-free and requires a strict value discipline within which it is selected, developed and deployed. A special effort has to be made to return to appropriate human scale both in the social systems and physical environment.

The *Shariah* is the core of the world-view of Islam. Although the *Shariah* has been described as 'Islamic law', its boundaries extend beyond the limited horizons of law. As such, the *Shariah* is a pragmatic methodology geared towards solving today's and tomorrow's problems. Manzoor suggested that the *Shariah* is a value-centred system as it exists to realize the values inherent in such key Islamic concepts as *tawhid*, *khilafah*, *istislah*, *halal* and *haram*.<sup>23</sup> City building and planning is then to be done within the parameters of the *Shariah*: the Islamic environment is to provide the support structure for the *Shariah* and in turn be formed by it.

One of the most basic principles of the *Shariah* is the declaration of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) that 'there shall be no injury, and no perpetuation of injury'.<sup>24</sup> These principles prohibiting undue injury and abuse of rights form the basis of a

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<sup>23</sup>Manzoor, S.P., "Environment and values: the Islamic perspective", in Ziauddin Sardar (ed.), *The Touch of Midas, op. cit.*, p. 150.

<sup>24</sup>Ziauddin Sardar, "Towards an Islamic theory of environment", in Ziauddin Sardar (ed.), *The Touch of Midas, op. cit.*, p. 229.

large part of Islamic resource law. Invaluable resources such as pasture, woodland, wildlife, certain minerals and especially water cannot be privately owned in their natural state or monopolized in Islamic law. They are managed publicly for the common good of all, and everyone is to have equal access to them. The Prophet (s.a.w) also established inviolate zones bordering water-courses, utilities and towns. Within these *haram* zones, the *Shariah* restricts or prohibits development to ensure that invaluable resources are protected. Thus such zones are maintained around towns and cities to ensure that their carrying capacity is not exceeded and to provide habitat for wildlife.

Thus we see that although Islam does not forbid private property ownership, the exercise of private property rights is circumscribed by the greater needs of the community, and the individual is forbidden to use his property in ways resulting in net harm to society, according to the Islamic principles of social solidarity (*takaful*) and the abuse of rights.<sup>25</sup> The Islamic state sets the standards and provides incentives and compensation for economic losses, favouring the most beneficial land uses and the best and most humane management techniques so as to realize the betterment of civilization (*islah*) and encourage goodness (*ihsan*). In this regard, the traditional role of the office of inspection (*hisbah*) is particularly important with regard to enforcement of standards, removal of nuisances and misuse of property. Unfortunately, the role of *muhtasib* in traditional Islamic cities as an enforcer of Islamic regulations concerning the built environment has been replaced by today's system of municipalities whose officers sometimes lack accountability.

## CONCLUSION

The present crisis confronting mankind today is basically a crisis of values and that the only way out of the urban (or other human) predicament lies in the construction of a new Islamic social order based upon its ideals, values and principles. Many Muslim thinkers today believe that it is only through a thorough understanding of the ideals and values of Islam that the Muslim community can develop innovative approaches to the solution of urban and other developmental problems.

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<sup>25</sup>Othman B. Llewellyn, "The objectives of Islamic law and administrative planning", *Ekistics*, Vol. 47 No.280 (1980), p.12.

The Islamic approach calls for a total change, that is, change within the people themselves and their social environment. While the Western approach believes that radical change can be brought about by merely changing their environment, Islam argues that change must come first within men and their community themselves. Whatever structural adjustments that need to be made to the environment must be made in line with the new value-orientation of the Muslim community. It is only by drawing upon our own spiritual and historical sources can Muslims ever hope to find a lasting solution to the urban predicament facing mankind today.