

Critical Comparison of the Concept of *Hablum Minal Alam* and Arne Naess's Deep Ecology within the Framework of Environmental Ethics

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Abstract

This study conducts a critical-comparative analysis of the Islamic environmental ethics concept *hablum minal 'alam* and Arne Naess's *deep ecology* within the framework of contemporary environmental discourse. Recognizing that modern ecological crises are not merely the result of technical and economic factors but stem from an anthropocentric paradigm that reduces nature to an object of exploitation, this research explores how these two frameworks offer alternative ontological and ethical foundations for human–nature relations. Employing a qualitative research approach through a normative–philosophical library study, this paper examines primary Islamic sources (the Qur'an, Hadith, and both classical and contemporary *fiqh al-bi'ah* literature) and major *deep ecology* texts, particularly Naess's formulations of *biospheric egalitarianism* and *self-realization*. The analysis reveals that *hablum minal 'alam* is rooted in a theocentric monotheistic worldview, positioning humans as *khalifah* (stewards) entrusted with maintaining cosmic balance, while *deep ecology* emphasizes an ecocentric perspective that recognizes the intrinsic value of all living beings beyond their instrumental utility. Despite fundamental metaphysical differences, both frameworks converge in rejecting exploitative attitudes and affirming moral responsibility, self-restraint, and respect for ecological integrity. The study concludes that a critical dialogue between *hablum minal 'alam* and *deep ecology* could reinforce ethical commitment and socio-religious legitimacy for environmental movements—especially in Muslim societies—by framing ecological concern as both a spiritual duty and a moral imperative for global environmental sustainability.

Keywords: *hablum minal 'alam*, deep ecology, Islamic environmental ethics, ecocentrism, ecological crisis

Introduction

The current global ecological crisis including climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and other environmental damage demands collaborative efforts across multiple disciplines and traditions of thought. Islamic religious perspectives and environmental philosophies such as Deep Ecology offer important ethical frameworks for addressing these issues. In Islam, environmental ethical values are reflected, for example, in the concept of *hablum minal 'alam* as part of *hablum minallah* (relationship with God) and *hablum minannas* (relationships between humans) (Irawan & Zahid, 2024). Meanwhile, new environmental movements such as Deep Ecology introduced by Arne Naess in the 1970s argued that all living things have their own intrinsic value, beyond their usefulness for humans (Naess, 1997). The

study of environmental ethics is important because these different metaphysical and ethical perspectives can mutually enrich understanding of how humans should interact with nature (not exploitatively) for the sake of sustainability. Islam as a moral standard needs to be interpreted contextually so that it is relevant to contemporary environmental problems (Irawan & Zahid, 2024). Thus, critically comparing the concepts of Islam and Deep Ecology can open constructive dialogue and integration of values in responding to the current environmental crisis.

The term *hablum minal 'alam* is actually not a literal text in the Qur'an or Hadith, but rather a modern conceptual construction to complement the pattern of Islamic relationships. *Hablum minal 'alam* is often referred to together with *hablum minallah* (human relationship with God) and *hablum minannas* (relationships between humans) as the "ethical triangle" of interactions in Muslim life (Irawan & Zahid, 2024). This concept emphasizes that humans' duties as caliphs (God's representatives) on earth include maintaining a balanced relationship with nature. In other words, Islam views nature as a trust from Allah to humans (Islam et al., 2024). In classical Islamic terminology, responsibility for caring for nature can be seen through the principle of *tasykiir* (*tawāsīr*) or wise management of Allah's creation, not over-exploitation.

Conceptually, *hablum minal 'alam* can be interpreted as "human relationship with nature" (Islam et al., 2024). This phrase emphasizes that humans have moral and spiritual obligations to nature, as important as obligations to God and each other. Irawan & Zahid (2024) state that in everyday life Muslims are bound by three ethical patterns, where environmental preservation is a form of worship within the framework of *hablum minal 'alam*. This approach is not a new concept in Islamic teachings, but rather a simplification of the values of *fiqh* and interpretation of the Al-Qur'an related to nature. For example, Seyyed Hossein Nasr (2000) and other traditional scholars emphasize that the universe is God's creation full of signs (*verses*) so that preserving it is part of obedience to God. All creatures and natural phenomena are integrated as part of a harmonious "*sunnatullah*" (God's natural law), so that the human-nature relationship is rooted in cosmic monotheism.

Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a normative-philosophical type of library research (Muzairi et al., 2014), because the object of study is the concept of Islamic environmental ethics in the formulation of *hablum minal 'alam* and Arne Naess' deep ecology ideas which are analyzed through primary and secondary texts. Primary data sources include

the Koran, hadith, works by Muslim thinkers on environmental ethics and fiqh al-bi'ah, as well as Naess's writings such as "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement" (Naess, 1973). Secondary data sources include books and scientific articles related to Islamic ecotheology, deep ecology, and contemporary environmental ethics (Nasr, 1996; Johnston, 2012; Djuned, 2023). Data was collected through documentation studies and analyzed using content analysis and comparative-critical analysis, by placing the concepts of *hablum minal 'alam* and deep ecology in a comparative matrix on metaphysical, anthropological, ethical and practical dimensions to reveal common ground, points of difference and their relevance for ethical responses to the ecological crisis.

Result

The term *hablum minal 'alam* is actually not a literal text in the Qur'an or Hadith, but rather a modern conceptual construction to complement the pattern of Islamic relationships. *Hablum minal 'alam* is often referred to together with *hablum minallah* (human relationship with God) and *hablum minannas* (relationships between humans) as the "ethical triangle" of interactions in Muslim life (Islam et al., 2024). This concept emphasizes that humans' duties as caliphs (God's representatives) on earth include maintaining a balanced relationship with nature. In other words, Islam views nature as a trust (trust) from Allah to humans (Furqani & Haneef, 2015). In classical Islamic terminology, responsibility for caring for nature can be seen through the principle of *tasykiir* (*tawāsīr*) or wise management of Allah's creation, not over-exploitation.

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Several verses of the Qur'an and Hadith reflect the obligation to protect nature. The Qur'an, for example, emphasizes that humans were created as caliphs with the task of caring for the earth (Furqani & Haneef, 2015). As in the word of Allah in QS al-Baqarah: 30, that:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ
وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

wa idz qâla rabbuka lil-malâ'ikati innî jâ'ilun fil-ardli khalîfah, qâlû a taj'alu fihâ may yufsidu fihâ wa yasfikud-dimâ', wa nahnu nusabbihu bihamdika wa nuqaddisu lak, qâla innî a'lamu mâ lâ ta'lamûn

(Remember) when your Lord said to the angels, "I will make a caliph on earth." They said, "Are You going to place someone there who will cause corruption and shed blood, while we praise You and sanctify Your name?" He said, "Indeed I know what you do not know (QS Al-Baqarah: 30)

The phrase "khalifah fi al-ardh" is traditionally interpreted as meaning that humans have a strategic role in managing the environment without destroying it. Environmental awareness is also reflected in the verses commanding justice and the prohibition against causing damage (fasad) to the earth (for example Q.S. 30:41 "Damage has appeared on land and sea because of the actions of human hands..."journal.ar-raniry.ac.id). In the Qur'an, Surah Al-A'râf (7:56) also emphasizes: "And do not cause mischief on the face of the earth...". This underlines that damage to nature is a sin and a direct consequence of human actions.

From the hadith perspective, the Prophet Muhammad SAW exemplified environmentally friendly behavior in his various sayings. For example, the Prophet forbade wasting water during ablution (rebuked "Don't be wasteful... even on the river bank" - HR. Ibnu Majah), which shows the principle of saving resources even in religious rituals (Furqani & Haneef, 2015). The famous hadith states "Whoever plants a tree, then birds or humans or animals eat it, then it is charity for him" (Furqani & Haneef, 2015).

This emphasizes the value of reward in sustainable actions (planting) that benefit other creatures. In other words, Islam instills environmental ethics in daily religious practices: maintaining balance, avoiding waste (isrâf), protecting living creatures, and seeing nature as part of the worship of thanksgiving for Divine blessings (Palvovich & Mikhailovna, 2025).

A number of modern fiqh concepts have also been developed to summarize this, for example fiqh al-bi'ah (environmental fiqh). Within this framework, contemporary ulama interpret sharia to protect the environment, using rules such as maşlahah (benefit), sad al-darâ'i (preventing madharat), and himāyah (protection of resources) (Hassan, 2022). The three

emphasized that preserving nature is *fardhu 'ain* (individual obligation) in order to prevent danger to present and future generations journal.ar-raniry.ac.id. In short, in Islam nature is positioned as a creation that must be treated fairly: not purified as holy-secular free from humans (creatures of God), but also not merely an object of use; but rather an integral part of God's order that is worthy of respect and preservation (*rahmatan lil-'âlamîn*) (Hassan, 2022).

Origins and Main Principles

Deep Ecology is a term introduced by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss in 1973. Næss contrasts "shallow ecology", which is anthropogenic and instrumentalist towards nature, with "deep ecology", which has ecocentric principles and recognizes the intrinsic value of all life (Naess, 2008). In his 1973 article "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement", Næss argued that the environmental crisis is a crisis of fundamental values. He introduced the term "biospherical egalitarianism" for this holistic ethic: all living organisms (and even ecosystems) have inherent value independent of their usefulness to humans (Naess, 1997). This means that the chains of life are seen as equal, without an explicit hierarchy between humans and other species.

The main principles of Deep Ecology by Naess and Sessions (1986) are also outlined in an eight-point platform, a summary of eight basic principles. These principles include: (1) The welfare and sustainability of human and non-human life have intrinsic value; (2) Wealth and biodiversity are valuable values; (3) Humans have no right to reduce biodiversity except for basic needs; (4) Human life can thrive with a reduced population; (5) Fundamental changes in attitudes are needed towards technology and consumer lifestyles; (6) Ecological identification of the self (Self) is extended to the larger circle of life; (7) Society must move towards a personal ecosophy paradigm (ecological wisdom) ; and (8) Commitment to act in accordance with these values (Naess, 1997). From this principle, it is clear that Deep Ecology advocates a radical lifestyle transformation, for example pro-environment, simple living, and population reduction to achieve ecosystem balance.

The philosophical basis of Deep Ecology is very different from the dominant Western tradition. Næss adopts an ecocentric view, where moral values do not belong exclusively to humans (anthropocentrism). In this framework, the boundaries between humans and nature are blurred: Næss develops the concept of the "ecological self" in which human identity expands to include the natural surroundings (Naess, 2008). In essence, people need to feel a deep affiliation with nature (self-realization) in order to care about it. Metaphysically, this contains holistic and sometimes animistic nuances: for example, respecting natural elements (rivers,

mountains) as if they were part of the community of life. Regarding religion, Naess himself was pluralist; it does not impose a theistic doctrine but opens up space for views of Gaia spirituality or traditional ecological wisdom. The ecocentric philosophy of Deep Ecology ultimately rejects the manipulation of nature based solely on economic logic, and encourages policies and laws to recognize the "rights of nature" and the equal value of life (Naess, 1997).

A comparison of Islamic concepts (*hablum minal 'alam*) and Deep Ecology needs to look at aspects of metaphysics, ethics, anthropology and environmental praxis.

In the realm of metaphysics, Islam is theocentric: nature is God's creation which is sacred-contingent, proof of His greatness (verse) and not something sacred or divine. The concept of *tawhid* (oneness of Allah) implies the harmonious unity of the universe, but the existence of God remains transcendent (Hassan, 2022). Therefore, nature has "value" within the framework of God's will – it is not independent as a moral subject, but rather a means and a sign. Islam teaches balance (*mīzān*) and prohibits *tasyarri'* (demanding absolute rights over nature), emphasizing that the absolute owner of nature is God (Furqani & Haneef, 2015). As Allah SWT says, in Al-Baqarah: 29, that:

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

huwalladzī khalaqa lakum mā fil-ardli jamī'an tsummastawâ ilas-samâ'i fa sawwâhunna sab'a samâwât, wa huwa bikulli syai'in 'alîm

It is He (Allah) who created everything on earth for you, then He went to (the creation of) the heavens, then He perfected them into seven heavens. He is All-Knowing of everything (QS al-Baqarah: 29)

On the other hand, Deep Ecology tends to be spiritually metaphysical or holistic. He does not posit God as the exclusive creator; often emphasizing the spiritual unity of the biosphere. Naess himself once noted that the roots of his thinking were intuitive towards cosmic connectedness, even imitating Eastern viewpoints. In Deep Ecology, nature has inherent value and cosmic harmony is a fundamental principle. For its adherents, each natural element can be considered to have its own ecological "spirit", rather than simply being a creation. Metaphysically, this view tends towards ecological pantheism: humans are not the center, but are an inseparable part of Gaia (the universe of life) (Naess, 1997).

Thus there is a fundamental difference: Islam emphasizes the divine dimension and human duties as God's representatives, while Deep Ecology focuses on the unity of life itself, sometimes without specific theological reference. This also raises potential criticism: Islam could view Deep Ecology as placing too much importance on God in creation, while supporters

of Deep Ecology could view Islam's view as “still too human-centric” (stewardship) (Islam et al., 2024).

At an ethical level, both perspectives oppose the mere exploitation of nature and advocate fair action towards the environment. Islam provides its ethical framework through Sharia and fiqh rules: for example amanah (amanat) requires the preservation of natural trust, maṣlaḥah directs environmental policy towards the common good, and sad al-ḍarā'i prohibits actions that have the potential to damage the public benefit. A number of scholars emphasize that protecting the environment is a religious obligation (fardhu 'ain) because it is in accordance with the principles of justice ('adl) and balance demanded by the Al-Qur'an (Islam et al., 2024). People's prejudice (ignorance) is not an excuse, considering the availability of verses and hadiths that explicitly tell us to protect nature. For example, an attitude of economy (prohibition of isrâf) in the use of water or food encourages sustainable living.

Deep Ecology provides a more radical and universal environmental ethic. With intrinsic value in all creatures, he rejects the human-power hierarchy that is considered to be the root of environmental problems. According to its platform, human action is limited to “vital needs” only, even proposing reducing the human population to restore ecosystems. In addition, Deep Ecology promotes ecological spirituality and biosphere solidarity (Naess, 2008). This ethic encourages a simple lifestyle (friluftsliv) and an appreciation of nature as a spiritual value, not a commodity. In this case, Deep Ecology places humans on the same level as other species, requiring humans to take an "environmental-welfare" perspective, not just "human-welfare".

When compared, Islam prioritizes a balance between human needs and responsibility at alamjournal.ar-raniry.ac.idjournal.ar-raniry.ac.id. Humans are allowed to use nature according to their duties, but there are many prohibitions on excessive exploitation (for example, Islamic criminal law is strict on certain environmental crimesjournal.ar-raniry.ac.id). Deep Ecology tends to limit the anthropogenic role almost solely to ecosystems. Although both oppose damage, Islam grounds this prohibition through God's law and moral-spiritual recompense, while Deep Ecology relies more on holistic logical arguments and environmental spirituality. Despite the different contexts, (Johnston 2012) notes that both traditions agree that the natural world "is an integrated whole with humans as an inseparable part" and emphasize the importance of protecting nature, even though they view the source of life's value differently (Islam et al., 2024).

From an anthropological perspective, Islam positions humans uniquely as perfect creatures with reason and faith. Humans are seen as special but are also burdened with great

responsibilities as caliphs (Islam et al., 2024). Human interests are not ignored: the Qur'an has a lot to say about human needs (ma'āyīš life), the welfare of the people, and social relations. Thus, Islamic ethics is often called stewardship, namely the caretaker, not the owner of nature. Psychologically, Islamic teachings tend to encourage love of nature as part of God's creation in order to avoid negligent and wrongful attitudes (QS. Al-A'râf 7:56) (Islam et al., 2024). The formation of environmental awareness is associated with faith and belief (faith must be manifested in good deeds towards fellow creatures) (Islam et al., 2024).

Deep Ecology actually expands the concept of self through what Næss calls the "ecological Self". It encourages humans to identify themselves as part of the great natural world; in Deep Ecology literature, personal identity extends to the ecosystem in which one lives. In other words, the ecological self crosses the boundaries of the individual ego. Anthropologically, Deep Ecology rejects human-nature dualism: it sees culture and nature as an inseparable unity. As a consequence, spiritual tendencies or beliefs can emerge, for example the new animist view that rivers or forests have a "soul" that must be respected. Arne Næss even suggests contemplative practices and direct experience of nature (*friluftsliv*) to cultivate personal ecological awareness.

This contrast makes Islamic anthropology versus Deep Ecology different in their motorism: Islam emphasizes rational and religious responsibility, while Deep Ecology emphasizes emotional/ecstatic experiences of nature. Islam sees humans as moral agents among creation, while Deep Ecology wants humans to see themselves as the only "branch" on the tree of life that is neither higher nor lower than other branches. As a result, Deep Ecology is often considered to reduce the degree of human "specialness" (critique of anthropocentrism), while Islam rejects the idea that nature is "holy alone without God". However, both views agree that an attitude of tolerance and gratitude for nature is important to develop in human and divine relations (Islam et al., 2024).

Practically, the ethical framework resulting from these two traditions is also different at the level of social and policy implementation. In Muslim communities, the concept of *hablum minal 'alam* is usually actualized through religiously based environmental education programs, organizational movements, and ritual initiatives such as greening mosques. For example, religious organizations in Indonesia have formulated the theme of environmental da'wah with the jargon "love for the motherland", combining Islamic values and nationalism in the role of caring for the environment (Irawan & Zahid, 2024). Religious education often begins to integrate nature conservation into Islamic jurisprudence books or school curricula, with the

message that destroying nature is a sin (Irawan & Zahid, 2024). Several fatwas and edicts emphasize that forest exploitation or air pollution can be categorized as haram if it harms the lives of many people (maslahah). Recommended daily practices include planting trees in the yard, recycling waste, and promoting clean technology as a form of environmental charity.

Deep Ecology, on the other hand, is often associated with radical or spiritual environmental activist non-governmental movements. Its supporters tend to practice a low-carbon lifestyle, vegetarianism, and choose to live close to nature (bioregionalism). Politically, Deep Ecology encourages structural reforms such as the recognition of "nature rights" and ecocentric democracy (every ecosystem has the right to be represented in decision making). For example, some Deep Ecology thinkers propose empowering customary law to conserve sacred areas or making natural areas legal entities (such as the case of the Whanganui River in New Zealand which received legal personality status). Sustainable and simple principles are the main focus in the daily life practices of Deep Ecology adherents: limiting consumption of non-essential goods and decentralizing the economy.

Comparatively, the implementation of Islam is mostly through moral education, religious-based fatwas/rules, and community movements with religious motivation (Irawan & Zahid, 2024). Meanwhile, Deep Ecology practices emphasize cross-cultural civil society actions and public structural policies that are inclusive of ecosystems (Irawan & Zahid, 2024). However, both meet in purpose: to mobilize mass participation in protecting nature. For example, Deep Ecology emphasizes the importance of "awakening" ecological awareness, while in Islam improving environmental attitudes is accompanied by the promise of a reward in the afterlife. Support from religious leaders as shown by Azzahra & Masyithoh (2024) encourages sermons and lectures to include environmental conservation messages; This is in line with the Deep Ecology slogan which requires a deep moral sensitivity towards nature.

Given the global scale of contemporary ecological challenges, a need arises for dialogue and integration between different ethical perspectives. Some observers see a fundamental compatibility between Islam and Deep Ecology in the love of nature and rejection of excessive exploitation (Islam et al., 2024). For example, Barnhill & Gottlieb (2001) cited by Johnston (2012) note that although the sources of value are different (God vs life itself), "a noteworthy similarity is that both Islam and deep ecology affirm that the universe is an integrated whole" and that humans must respond to nature with contemplation, appreciation, and protection (Islam et al., 2024). This opens up opportunities for synergistic cooperation: Islamic values which emphasize balance and responsibility can be enriched by the holistic spirit of Deep

Ecology, while the spirit of the Deep Ecology movement can be moderated by the theological foundation of Islam so as not to lead to spiritual nihilism.

In practice, such dialogue is for example realized through meetings of environmental scholars/activists, inter-religious forums, or public campaigns that combine religious teachings with ecological science. Global declarations such as Green Hajj and Islamic climate symposiums (such as in Istanbul 2015) are examples of actualizing Islamic-ecological discourse that is also resonant with the world ecological movement. In Indonesia, the concept of environmentally based Islamic boarding schools and the idea of "oxygen charity" show initiatives to integrate Islamic teachings with ecocentric principles (NU Green, and so on).

The relevance of this integration is enormous in the modern era. The climate crisis and the extinction of species require not only technical policies, but also changes in societal values. Both, Islam and Deep Ecology, emphasize that change arises from the transformation of human values and personality. As Sardi (2023) reminds us, the essence of religious teachings (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) must be expanded to include ecological awareness so that people not only obey rituals but also do justice to creation (Islam et al., 2024). Thus, building a shared narrative—for example the concept of “ecological Islam” or *eco-shariah*—can increase the legitimacy of the environmental movement in Muslim societies while complementing the more secular/humanistic perspective of Deep Ecology.

Conclusions

Both the *hablum minal 'alam* perspective in Islam and Næss's Deep Ecology provide an important ethical foundation for environmental conservation efforts. Despite coming from different traditions, both reject extreme exploitation and support respectful treatment of nature. Their differences lie in metaphysical sources (theocentric vs holistic ecocentric), ethical basis (*Shariah* vs intrinsic value of the biosphere), as well as anthropological emphasis (caliph vs part of unity). However, some observers emphasize the basic similarities: nature is seen as an integrated whole and humans are an inseparable part of that whole. In times of contemporary ecological crisis, dialogue between Islamic perspectives and Deep Ecology can be mutually enriching. Islamic approaches can incorporate the spiritual depth of Deep Ecology, while Deep Ecology can benefit from Islam's social-theological mission orientation in mobilizing communities. In practical terms, this synergy encourages conservation strategies that are rooted in local and universal values, utilizing the power of morals and religious institutions to instill global ecological awareness.

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