

History of Wisdom In Nature and Islamic Environmentalism in the UK

by Muzammal Hussain, Founder of WIN

Before the Paradigm Shift

In the 1990's, I came across very few Muslim in the UK, who seemed to value the need to consciously take care of the earth. What few I did, were always surprised that there were others. "I thought I was the only one" became a mantra that I began to hear frequently

. As one of a few Muslims who gave the occasional talk on Islamic ecology, and who was involved with local group activism in Brighton, I reflected on the possibility of

starting local Islamic ecology groups in the UK as a way to join up those that had a sense of this ethic with others who also did.

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The Birth of LINE (London Islamic Network for the Environment)

In early 2004, I used an Islamic environmental list I had developed over the years (later called Ecobites

) as a vehicle to publicise my intention to form a network in London, which is where I felt there would be greatest potential, even though I was then living in Brighton. The first meeting of just three people took place on January 10th 2004 in my parents home, and with sustained effort the group became established. Eight months later on September 5th 2004, this new group decided on an official name: the

London Islamic Network for the Environment

, or
LINE

.

The group held open monthly forums in central London with an inclusive circle format, reflecting on a range of themes; from Qur'anic reflections to 'Green Economics'; from Peace activism to biofuels; from Forum Theatre to Modern Social movements; from Palestine to Food & farming... and more! We sometimes had speakers, and on each occasion drew on the wisdom in the room to stimulate reflection and dialogue. We also delivered numerous talks and workshops to a wide cross section of society and mobilised the muslim Community to take action.

More on these early days is on this [audio interview](#).

Interconnectedness: Transcending the Single Issue Trap

What I found to be particularly striking about the journey of LINE is that it was not a group focussed exclusively on the 'environment' – it was holistic, and within its ethos was a recognition of the interconnectedness of things – the human, societal, economic, environmental all intertwined. It recognised the reality of ecology, and indeed Unity. Additionally the core in the group began to increasingly value the need for working in a *conscious* way together, and we thus participated in formal group development training to build on and further actualise this.

The Name Change: Enter Wisdom In Nature

Gradually, we began to feel some discomfort over our name. More about this is [here](#) , for anyone who would like to know more. Consequently, in November 2009, after discussions that included a

consensus-decision-making

process, we unanimously agreed on a change of name and became

Wisdom In Nature

. We continue as an Islamic group and hope that our new name captures more of the essence of our work.

Enter Permaculture... with Islam

As we continued on our journey, we also began to experience and value the contribution of permaculture to

empower

people and communities. We began to notice the parallels between the values and approach of permaculture and indeed, Islam. For instance, both place a clear value on nature –

permaculturists

explicitly articulating that nature demonstrates qualities of resilience and sustainability, and the

Qur

'an

describing nature as signs that point to the Divine – nature reflecting Divine attributes or names – such as Compassion (

Ar Rahman

), Mercy (

Ar

Rahim

), Wisdom (

Al Hakim

), Truth (

Al

Haqq

), Power (

Al

Jabbar

) and so forth.

The richness of this intersection and value we recognised in Permaculture has led several of us to train as Permaculture Designers – to consciously weave permaculture design into the work of WIN and to teach Permaculture to the general public. We have often ended up in the role of pioneers and with no example in front of us designed and deliver what was probably the first course on Islam and Permaculture anywhere in the world, in 2010.

The Evolving Journey

Additionally our curiosity in exploring group work and facilitation that we would apply to our work, internally and outwardly, has led us to also offer workshops and courses in this area. Thus, weaving together Permaculture, Islamic ecology and Facilitation, allows us to offer powerful training that is educational, fun, inspiring, and transformative.

Our role over the years has become such that we deliver experiential courses and training to support groups and communities to acquire the tools, skills, awareness and inspiration, so we can co-create the resilient, wholesome and beautiful world we know is possible.

We welcome you on board this journey if you are not yet a part of it, and look forward to meeting you, sharing, and benefitting from one another's presence as we travel the way!

<http://wisdominnature.org/resources/history/>