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TOWARDS A TAWHIDIC EPISTEMOLOGY OF PLANNING: REFRAMING AL-‘ILM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOVERNANCE IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

Planning theory has evolved from technocratic rationalism to communicative and sustainability-oriented paradigms, yet its epistemological foundations remain largely secular and immanent. This article reconstructs planning rationality through a Tawhidic Epistemology of Planning grounded in the Islamic concept of *al-‘ilm*. Using qualitative conceptual and comparative epistemological analysis, the study examines Western planning theory and Islamic epistemology across ontological, epistemic, and teleological dimensions. The analysis reveals structural fragmentation within secular planning rationality and identifies the integrative potential of Tawhid as an ontological core. Building upon these findings, the article develops a layered framework consisting of ontological unity, integrated epistemic foundations, ethical–normative orientation, and governance translation. The framework preserves empirical inquiry and participatory governance while re-situating them within moral accountability and metaphysical coherence. The study contributes to planning theory by re-centering epistemology as a foundational concern and offers preliminary implications for sustainable development governance in Malaysia, particularly for sustainability assessment practices, statutory spatial planning interpretation, and professional planning ethics.

Keywords: Tawhidic Epistemology, Islamic Planning Ethics, Sustainable Development Governance, Spatial Planning Theory, Malaysia

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INTRODUCTION

Planning theory has undergone significant intellectual evolution over the past century. Emerging from the rational–comprehensive paradigm, the discipline initially framed planning as applied scientific reasoning grounded in technical analysis and optimization (Faludi, 1973; Hall, P., & Tewdwr-Jones, M., 2011). Subsequent critiques, however, highlighted the political and communicative dimensions of planning practice. Forester (1989) demonstrated how planning decisions are shaped by power relations and institutional constraints, while Healey (1997) reframed planning as a deliberative process grounded in stakeholder dialogue. Planning rationality thus evolved from instrumental analysis toward communicative legitimacy (MacCallum, D., 2008).

More recently, sustainability and resilience paradigms have expanded the normative scope of planning theory. Concerns over climate change, ecological degradation, and social inequality have repositioned planning as a key arena for negotiating long-term futures (Campbell, 2016; Meerow et al., 2016). Despite these developments, the epistemological foundations of planning theory remain largely implicit. Dominant paradigms continue to operate within secular assumptions in which knowledge is validated through empirical evidence, procedural legitimacy, or discursive agreement, leaving questions of metaphysical coherence and moral accountability largely unaddressed (Davidoff, P., 1965).

The issue becomes particularly significant in plural societies where civilizational worldviews shape governance discourse. Malaysia provides a relevant context for examining such epistemological questions (Shamsul, A. B., 2001; Ooi, K., 2003). Recent governance discourse, including the Malaysia MADANI framework, similarly emphasizes ethical governance and sustainable development. As a multi-ethnic nation whose constitutional framework recognizes Islam as the religion of the Federation, Malaysian planning operates at the intersection of Western administrative rationality and Islamic ethical traditions (Lateh, N. H. M. et al., 2024; Balaraman, R. A. et al., 2024). While Islamic concepts such as Maqasid al-Shariah have been incorporated into planning discourse, their role remains largely normative rather than epistemological.

This raises a key theoretical question: can Islamic civilizational concepts contribute not only normative guidance but also epistemological foundations for planning rationality? Although this question is increasingly relevant within the Malaysian context, systematic attempts to reconstruct planning theory at the epistemological level remain limited.

This article argues that meaningful epistemic coherence requires reconstruction at the level of epistemology. It proposes a Tawhidic Epistemology of Planning grounded in the concept of al-‘ilm, which re-situates empirical

inquiry, ethical reasoning, and governance practice within an ontological framework defined by Tawhid. The study is guided by the following research question:

How can planning rationality be reconstructed through a Tawhidic epistemological framework that integrates empirical science, ethical accountability, and ontological unity in a manner relevant to Malaysian development governance?

To address this question, the article adopts a qualitative conceptual design based on comparative epistemological analysis across ontology, epistemology, and teleology. Through conceptual synthesis, it develops a layered framework translating ontological unity into planning governance.

This article contributes to planning scholarship in three ways. First, it re-centers epistemology as a foundational concern. Second, it develops a structured Tawhidic framework integrating empirical inquiry with ethical accountability. Third, it advances theoretical pluralism by demonstrating the relevance of civilizational epistemologies to contemporary planning theory.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Secular Epistemology in Planning Theory

Planning theory emerged within Enlightenment rationalism, privileging empirical verification and instrumental reasoning. The rational–comprehensive model framed planning as systematic analysis aimed at optimizing decision-making through technical expertise and empirical evidence (Faludi, 1973).

Late twentieth-century critiques challenged this technocratic orientation. Forester (1989), Wolff, A. (2020) and Levin-Keitel, M., et al., (2017) highlighted the communicative and political dimensions of planning, emphasizing how decisions are shaped by power relations and institutional constraints. Healey (1997) subsequently articulated the communicative turn, reframing planning as collaborative deliberation among stakeholders rather than purely technical optimization. In this perspective, planning rationality becomes dialogical and socially embedded. Despite these paradigm shifts, planning theory continues to rely primarily on empiricism and procedural legitimacy, leaving deeper ontological questions outside its analytical framework (Innes, J. E., 1995; Rittel, H. W., 1973).

Recent scholarship has examined competing rationalities within strategic planning processes (Mattila, 2024), highlighting tensions between instrumental efficiency and deliberative legitimacy. Similarly, evidence-informed policy discourse reinforces empirical authority by emphasizing data analytics and evidence synthesis in decision-making (Head, 2016). While these

developments strengthen methodological sophistication, they do not fundamentally challenge the secular epistemological premises underlying planning rationality.

Overall, planning theory has diversified methodologically from technocratic to communicative and strategic paradigms yet continues to operate within largely secular epistemological assumptions.

Sustainability, Resilience, and Governance Debates

The sustainability paradigm represents a major normative expansion within planning theory. Campbell's (2016) "planner's triangle" highlights the enduring tension between economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity, while resilience scholarship further broadens planning's conceptual scope. Urban resilience is commonly defined as the capacity of cities to absorb, adapt, and transform in response to shocks and stresses (Meerow et al., 2016), with adaptive governance playing a key role in managing complex socio-ecological systems (Folke, 2016). Together, these perspectives position planning as an integrative framework for addressing long-term environmental and societal challenges.

However, several scholars caution that resilience discourse may become managerialized. Pizzo (2015) argues that resilience risks conceptual vagueness when translated into policy frameworks, while Datola (2023) demonstrates how resilience is often operationalized through regulatory indicators and performance metrics. Although such tools enhance measurability, they may also dilute normative depth.

Debates surrounding the concept of public interest reveal similar tensions. Recent scholarship has further examined competing schools of thought surrounding the concept of public interest in planning, particularly in relation to procedural legitimacy, distributive justice, and normative interpretation (Sheydayi & Dadashpoor, 2022). Dadashpoor and Sheydayi (2021) demonstrate that public interest is interpreted differently across planning contexts, oscillating between procedural legitimacy and distributive justice. Planning ethics scholarship further highlights the challenges planners face when balancing professional responsibility with institutional constraints (Sturzaker & Hickman, 2024).

These developments illustrate the expanding normative scope of planning theory. Sustainability, resilience, and justice are increasingly central to planning discourse (Jepson Jr, E. J., 2009). Nevertheless, these commitments are frequently framed through procedural and managerial instruments rather than grounded in coherent ontological foundations.

Islamic Epistemology and the Concept of Al-'Ilm

Islamic epistemology presents an alternative orientation grounded in ontological unity. The concept of al-'ilm understands knowledge as both a cognitive and ethical phenomenon. Unlike secular epistemologies that separate fact from value, Islamic thought integrates epistemology with ontology and teleology.

Tawhid (the affirmation of divine unity) constitutes the ontological core of Islamic epistemology. Reality is understood as unified within a coherent moral order. Knowledge derives legitimacy not solely from empirical verification but from alignment with this ontological unity. Islamic scholarship recognizes multiple sources of knowledge: revelation (wahy), intellect ('aql), empirical observation, and reflective reasoning. These sources are complementary rather than antagonistic. Empirical inquiry is encouraged, yet it operates within moral accountability.

Teleology is central. Knowledge is purposive, oriented toward justice ('adl), balance (mizan), and public good (maslahah). Governance is conceptualized as trusteeship (amanah), implying accountability beyond institutional compliance. Contemporary scholarship has applied Islamic ethical principles to development policy, finance, and governance. However, these applications often function at the level of normative guidance rather than epistemological reconstruction. The deeper question of how ontological unity might reshape planning rationality remains underexplored.

Malaysian Planning Scholarship and Normative Integration

Within Malaysian planning discourse, issues of sustainable urban growth, housing governance, and environmental management have received considerable scholarly attention. Existing PMJ studies have examined liveability within the Islamic framework of Maqasid al-Shariah, low-middle income housing challenges, and compact city elements for sustainable urban development (Dali et al., 2016; Kamal et al., 2020; Nor'Azmi & Sahrir, 2024).

Although these studies demonstrate growing engagement with sustainability and governance challenges, they generally operate within institutional and policy-based rationalities. Islamic ethical constructs particularly Maqasid al-Shariah are occasionally referenced in discussions of wellbeing and development, yet their application often remains normative rather than epistemological. Recent Malaysian planning scholarship has also begun engaging with Malaysia MADANI-oriented governance discourse, particularly in relation to ethical planning, community well-being, and sustainable governance in emerging technological contexts (Embong et al., 2026).

Consequently, Islamic principles tend to function as evaluative supplements within existing planning frameworks rather than informing the foundational rationality of planning itself. Thus, Malaysian planning scholarship

demonstrates growing normative engagement with sustainability and governance challenges, yet systematic epistemological reconstruction remains limited.

Identifying the Epistemological Gap

The preceding discussion reveals a structured gap across both global and Malaysian planning scholarship. Planning theory has developed sophisticated procedural tools and expanded its normative commitments to sustainability, justice, and public interest. Malaysian planning research has likewise engaged actively with housing, urban development, and environmental governance.

However, across these domains, epistemological assumptions remain largely implicit and secular. Normative values are frequently acknowledged, yet they are typically operationalized through procedural instruments rather than grounded within a coherent ontological framework.

The epistemological gap therefore lies not in the absence of normative concern but in the absence of ontological integration. Planning theory continues to operate within frameworks that separate empirical rationality from deeper metaphysical coherence. This study addresses that gap by developing a Tawhidic Epistemology of Planning that integrates empirical inquiry, ethical orientation, and ontological unity within a coherent theoretical model relevant to Malaysian development governance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative conceptual research design grounded in comparative epistemological analysis. Unlike empirical studies that rely on quantitative data, surveys, or case-based fieldwork, conceptual research seeks to clarify foundational assumptions, refine theoretical constructs, and construct integrative frameworks through systematic analysis of ideas (Jabareen, 2009). The research problem concerns the ontological and epistemic grounding of planning rationality. Such a problem is philosophical in nature. It requires examination of foundational assumptions embedded within planning theory and Islamic epistemology rather than empirical measurement of planning outcomes. The methodology is therefore designed to uncover structural differences in epistemic orientation and synthesize them into a coherent theoretical model.

Research Design: Comparative Epistemological Analysis

The research design proceeds in two sequential phases:

Comparative epistemological examination

The first phase systematically compares two bodies of knowledge:

- i. Dominant paradigms within Western planning theory (rational–comprehensive, communicative, sustainability-oriented approaches)
- ii. Islamic epistemology centered on the concept of al-'ilm and grounded in Tawhid

The comparison is structured across three analytical dimensions:

- (a) Ontology – What assumptions are made about the nature of reality?
- (b) Epistemology – What constitutes legitimate knowledge and authority?
- (c) Teleology – What is the ultimate purpose or orientation of knowledge and development?

This structured comparison avoids superficial juxtaposition. Instead, it interrogates deep structural premises. For example, in secular planning theory, ontology is typically immanent and socially constructed; epistemic authority derives from empirical verification or discursive legitimacy; teleology is often implicit and instrumental. In Islamic epistemology, ontology is unified (Tawhidic), epistemic authority integrates revelation and reason, and teleology is explicitly moral and purposive.

The aim of this phase is not to declare one tradition superior to another but to identify structural contrasts and latent complementarities. Both traditions are treated analytically rather than polemically.

Conceptual synthesis and framework construction

Following comparative analysis, the second phase involves conceptual synthesis. This phase draws upon framework-building methodologies articulated in conceptual research literature (Jabareen, 2009), which emphasize identification, categorization, and relational integration of core concepts.

The synthesis proceeds through three steps; abstraction, translation, and structuring as illustrated in **Figure 1**.

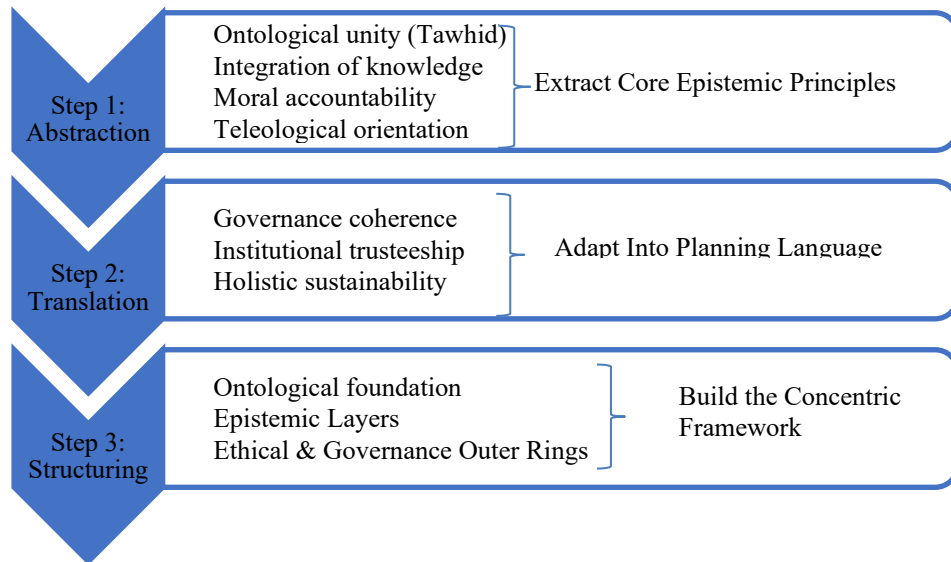


Figure 1: Methodological synthesis process for constructing the Tawhidic Epistemology of Planning framework
Source: Authors' conceptual synthesis

As illustrated in **Figure 1**, the synthesis begins with abstraction, where core epistemic principles derived from Islamic thought are identified. These principles are then translated into planning-relevant concepts and subsequently structured into a layered framework linking ontology, ethics, and governance practice.

Normative Reconstruction

A further methodological dimension is normative reconstruction. Planning theory already incorporates normative aspirations sustainability, equity, and public interest. However, these aspirations often lack ontological anchoring. Normative reconstruction seeks to reposition such commitments within a coherent epistemological structure.

Rather than imposing external moral doctrine, this approach examines whether existing planning values can be stabilized through ontological integration. The objective is coherence, not replacement. Normative reconstruction thus functions as a bridge between civilizational epistemology and contemporary governance systems. It avoids both technocratic reductionism and theological imposition.

Scope and Limitations

As a conceptual study, this research does not empirically test the proposed framework through case studies or quantitative analysis. Its contribution lies in epistemological clarification and theoretical construction through comparative analysis of Western planning theory and Islamic epistemology. While the framework is developed with reference to the Malaysian governance context, it is presented as an epistemic orientation that can coexist within plural and constitutional planning systems. Future research may operationalize the framework empirically by examining its implications for sustainability assessment, spatial planning instruments, and governance accountability mechanisms.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As this study adopts a conceptual and comparative design, the “results” presented here refer to structural findings derived from epistemological analysis rather than empirical data. The findings emerge from systematic comparison between dominant secular planning paradigms and Islamic epistemology structured around Tawhid. These findings are then synthesized into a layered Tawhidic Epistemology of Planning framework.

Comparative Epistemological Findings

The comparative analysis reveals three primary structural contrasts that shape planning rationality at its deepest level: (1) ontological configuration, (2) epistemic authority, and (3) teleological orientation. These dimensions do not merely differentiate philosophical traditions; they influence how planning knowledge is validated, how sustainability is conceptualized, and how governance decisions are justified.

Ontology: Fragmented Immanence versus Ontological Unity

Secular planning theory operates within an immanent ontology in which reality is treated as materially constituted and socially organized, and knowledge derives primarily from empirical observation and institutional procedures. Even communicative paradigms remain largely confined to socio-political domains, leaving transcendental dimensions outside formal planning rationality.

Economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity are conceptualized as competing domains requiring balancing mechanisms (Campbell, 2016). Sustainability becomes a negotiation among interests rather than an expression of integrated order.

Malaysian planning scholarship reflects similar structural balancing. For example, Dali, Abdullah, and Ahmad Sarkawi (2016) emphasize the need to

reconcile housing development with environmental sustainability. Their analysis acknowledges ecological responsibility but situates integration within regulatory instruments and policy frameworks. The ontological question of whether development objectives derive from a unified moral order remains outside the analytical scope.

Similarly, recent Malaysian planning studies have explored compact city elements as approaches to enhancing sustainable urban development and spatial efficiency (Nor'Azmi & Sahrir, 2024).

By contrast, Tawhid establishes ontological unity. Reality is understood as coherent within a single moral and metaphysical order. Economic, social, and ecological domains are not separate spheres requiring negotiation but interconnected dimensions of a unified creation. Development is therefore not a balancing exercise among competing sectors but an expression of maintaining harmony within an integrated system.

This ontological distinction has significant implications. Where secular planning seeks equilibrium among fragmented objectives, a Tawhidic ontology frames integration as foundational. Fragmentation is interpreted not merely as policy inefficiency but as epistemic misalignment.

Epistemic Authority: Procedural Legitimacy versus Moral Accountability

Contemporary planning systems derive epistemic authority primarily from procedural legitimacy. Knowledge is validated through institutional processes: expert consultation, public participation, regulatory compliance, and empirical evidence (Head, 2016). Legitimacy is procedural and internally justified.

The communicative paradigm reinforces this orientation by emphasizing stakeholder dialogue as the basis of rational agreement (Healey, 1997). Decisions are considered legitimate when they emerge from inclusive deliberation. While procedural safeguards are essential for transparency and democratic accountability, they do not necessarily ensure moral coherence. Public participation may legitimize decisions that satisfy short-term interests yet undermine long-term ecological balance.

Malaysian planning scholarship has also examined housing affordability and urban governance challenges, particularly in relation to low-middle income housing and sustainable urban development (Kamal et al., 2020). Nevertheless, such analyses remain largely framed within institutional and regulatory rationalities.

In contrast, a Tawhidic epistemology expands epistemic authority beyond procedural validation. Knowledge must align with justice ('adl), balance (mizan), and trusteeship (amanah). Governance is conceptualized as a moral trust rather than merely administrative function. This does not negate participatory governance or empirical analysis. Instead, it introduces a dual evaluative horizon.

Decisions must satisfy both procedural legitimacy and moral accountability. Evidence remains necessary, but it is interpreted within an ethical framework that transcends institutional consensus.

Teleology: Instrumental Optimization versus Holistic Flourishing

Modern planning rationality is predominantly instrumental, defined by policy objectives and measurable indicators. Even sustainability initiatives frequently reduce wellbeing to quantifiable outputs.

Resilience discourse illustrates this orientation. Urban resilience is defined in terms of adaptive capacity and system functionality (Meerow et al., 2016). While valuable, such definitions prioritize system performance rather than ultimate purpose. Datola (2023) demonstrates how resilience is often operationalized through managerial metrics. Similarly, Malaysian sustainability research emphasizes performance indicators and compliance frameworks (Adanan, N. Q. A. et al., 2021).

Islamic epistemology introduces teleology as central to knowledge. Development is oriented toward holistic flourishing, encompassing material sufficiency, moral integrity, social cohesion, and spiritual consciousness. Knowledge is purposive, directed toward sustaining balance within creation.

Teleological orientation reframes sustainability. Rather than merely managing resources efficiently, sustainability becomes stewardship grounded in ontological unity. Long-term wellbeing is evaluated not only through quantitative indicators but also through alignment with justice and balance.

Table 1: Comparative Epistemological Dimensions of Planning

Dimension	Secular Planning Rationality	Tawhidic Epistemology of Planning
Ontology (Nature of Reality)	Fragmented Immanence: Reality is viewed as materially constituted and socially organized, often bracketing transcendental dimensions.	Ontological Unity: Reality is understood as a coherent, unified moral and metaphysical order grounded in Tawhid.
Epistemology (Source of Authority)	Procedural Legitimacy: Knowledge is validated through institutional processes, empirical evidence, and stakeholder consensus.	Moral Accountability: Knowledge integrates empirical inquiry with revelation and intellect, emphasizing justice ('adl), balance (mizan), and trust (amanah).
Teleology (Purpose of Knowledge)	Instrumental Optimization: Focused on achieving measurable policy targets, efficiency, and system functionality.	Holistic Flourishing: Oriented toward sustaining harmony in creation and achieving material, moral, and spiritual well-being.

Dimension	Secular Planning Rationality	Tawhidic Epistemology of Planning
Sustainability Approach	Equilibrium of Fragments: A negotiation or "balancing act" between competing economic, environmental, and social sectors.	Stewardship as Unity: Integration is foundational; sustainability is an expression of maintaining the inherent balance of a unified system.

Source: Author's synthesis based on the comparative epistemological analysis

Unlike communicative, collaborative, or justice-oriented planning frameworks, the Tawhidic Epistemology of Planning does not derive legitimacy solely from procedural consensus, stakeholder participation, or distributive negotiation. Instead, it grounds planning rationality within an ontological conception of unity in which empirical inquiry, ethical accountability, and governance are integrated within a coherent metaphysical framework. In this sense, the framework extends beyond procedural normativity toward epistemological reconstruction.

Development of the Tawhidic Epistemology of Planning Framework

Building upon the comparative findings, this study constructs the Tawhidic Epistemology of Planning as a four-layered concentric framework, as illustrated in Figure 2. The concentric structure reflects hierarchical coherence, with outer layers deriving direction from inner foundations.

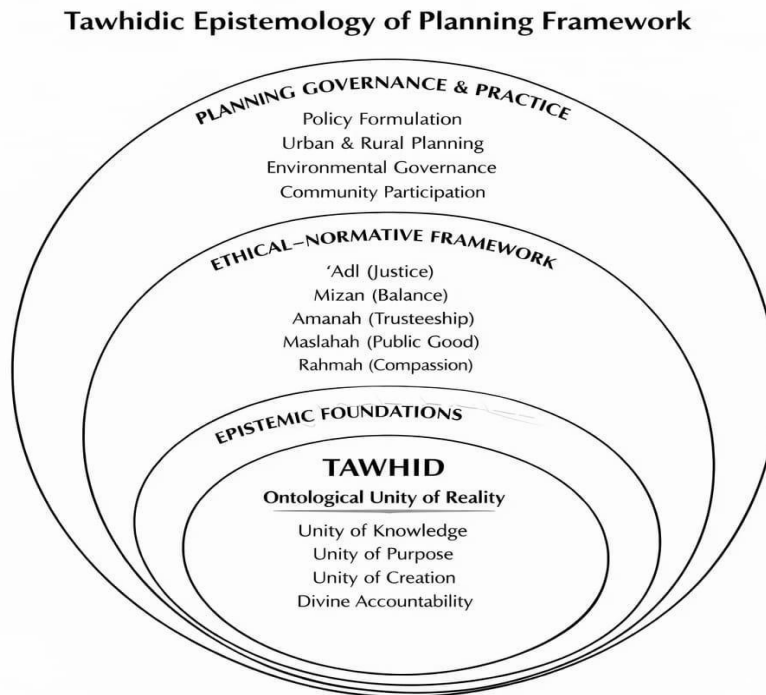


Figure 2: Concentric framework of the Tawhidic Epistemology of Planning
Source: Authors

As shown in **Figure 2**, the framework is structured hierarchically, beginning with Tawhid as the ontological core, followed by integrated epistemic foundations, ethical–normative orientation, and governance translation.

In practical planning terms, the framework may inform the ethical interpretation of statutory planning instruments in Malaysia, including development control decisions, sustainability assessment mechanisms such as MURNInets, and spatial planning guidelines under the Town and Country Planning Act 1976. Rather than treating sustainability solely as technical compliance, the framework repositions planning evaluation within broader considerations of justice (ʿadl), balance (mizan), and public wellbeing (maslahah).

The Ethical-Normative Orientation: Applying ‘Adl and Mizan in the Malaysian Context

The principles of ‘Adl (Justice) and Mizan (Balance) within the Tawhidic framework provide a robust evaluative tool for contemporary planning challenges in Malaysia. For instance, in the rapid urbanization of Greater Kuala Lumpur, the drive for high-density commercial development often creates a tension between economic growth and social equity. From a Tawhidic perspective, ‘Adl necessitates that planning is not merely a negotiation of market forces, but a proactive commitment to ensuring the "right to the city" for all social strata, preventing the marginalization of low-income communities in favor of luxury enclaves.

Furthermore, the preservation of Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs or KSAS - Kawasan Sensitif Alam Sekitar) in states like Selangor and Pahang serves as a critical application of Mizan. While secular planning might view forest reserves as "undeveloped land" with potential opportunity costs, the Tawhidic epistemology views these areas as vital components of a unified ecological balance. Encroachment into KSAS for short-term development is seen as a disruption of the Mizan, violating the Amanah (trust) of stewardship. Thus, the framework justifies more stringent protection of KSAS not just as a regulatory requirement, but as a fundamental ontological necessity to maintain the harmony between man, nature, and the Creator.

CONCLUSION

Planning theory has undergone significant methodological evolution, yet its epistemological foundations remain largely implicit. From rational-comprehensive models to communicative and sustainability-oriented paradigms, the discipline has refined tools and expanded normative commitments without systematically interrogating the ontological assumptions that underlie planning rationality. This article has argued that such epistemological neutrality is neither conceptually sufficient nor contextually coherent, particularly within societies where civilizational worldviews continue to shape governance discourse.

Through comparative epistemological analysis, this study identified three structural contrasts between dominant secular planning rationality and Islamic epistemology: fragmented immanence versus ontological unity, procedural legitimacy versus moral accountability, and instrumental optimization versus teleological orientation toward holistic flourishing. These contrasts are not merely philosophical distinctions; they shape how sustainability, public interest, and justice are conceptualized within planning systems.

Building upon these findings, the study developed the Tawhidic Epistemology of Planning as a layered concentric framework integrating ontological unity, epistemic foundations, ethical–normative orientation, and

governance translation. At its core, Tawhid affirms unity of reality and knowledge, preventing fragmentation between material development and moral aspiration. Surrounding this core, integrated epistemic sources preserve empirical inquiry while situating it within moral accountability. Ethical principles of justice ('adl), balance (mizan), trusteeship (amanah), and public good (maslahah) translate ontological coherence into evaluative criteria. Finally, governance translation operationalizes these commitments within spatial planning instruments, sustainability assessment, and institutional practice.

Importantly, the framework does not reject empirical science or participatory governance. Rather, it re-situates them within a broader evaluative horizon. Evidence-based policy, stakeholder engagement, and sustainability metrics remain essential components of planning practice. However, their legitimacy is expanded beyond procedural compliance to include moral coherence and long-term stewardship. Planning rationality thus becomes integrative rather than fragmented.

The study contributes to theoretical pluralism by demonstrating that civilizational grounded epistemologies can engage rigorously with contemporary planning discourse. By foregrounding ontology as a legitimate dimension of inquiry, the article invites renewed reflection on the philosophical foundations of governance. Planning therefore emerges not merely as the technical coordination of land use but as a normative enterprise shaping collective futures.

For Malaysian development governance, the framework offers a basis for aligning planning practice with broader civilizational and ethical commitments, including recent governance discourse in Malaysia such as the Malaysia MADANI emphasis on ethical governance, societal balance, and sustainable wellbeing. Rather than replacing empirical science or statutory institutions, it provides a deeper evaluative horizon through which sustainability, justice, and professional responsibility may be interpreted more coherently.

Although this study remains conceptual, it establishes a structured foundation for future empirical work. Subsequent research may operationalise the framework within specific planning instruments, sustainability assessments, and development control processes. The Tawhidic Epistemology of Planning thus offers both a theoretical contribution and a pathway for strengthening planning coherence.

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