

Muslim Societies and Environmental Conservation: Economics and Policy

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ABSTRACT

The development of the conversion of rice fields and peatlands in Gambut Sub-district, Banjar Regency into residential areas has occurred since the 2000s. Today, 55 new settlement complexes have been established. Several factors are suspected to be the cause and are interrelated, including religious knowledge, power relations and control power from policy holders and economic needs. This study aims to trace the relationship between Muslim communities and environmental conservation and how far regulatory and economic factors affect environmental conservation. This research adopts quantitative research method using survey as the research instrument. The population used in this research is the community of Gambut Sub-district with a sample of 120 respondents. The results were tested using multiple linear regression test method. Based on the results, economic and policy variables partially and simultaneously have a significant influence on environmental conservation variables, where the Muslim community of Gambut plays an important role in environmental conservation by maintaining biodiversity, and preserving local wisdom in social and environmental interactions. Effective environmental conservation policies, which involve all sectors of society, can balance economic growth and policies that make economic stability and better environmental protection.

Perkembangan alih fungsi persawahan dan lahan gambut di Kecamatan Gambut Kabupaten Banjar menjadi area perumahan telah terjadi sejak tahun 2000-an. Saat ini telah berdiri 55 komplek permukiman baru. Ada beberapa faktor yang dicurigai menjadi penyebab dan saling berkaitan diantaranya pengetahuan agama, relasi kuasa dan kekuatan kontrol dari pemegang kebijakan dan kebutuhan ekonomi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melacak keterkaitan antara masyarakat muslim dan konservasi lingkungan serta seberapa jauh faktor regulasi dan ekonomi berpengaruh terhadap konservasi lingkungan. Penelitian ini mengadopsi metode penelitian kuantitatif dengan menggunakan survey sebagai instrumen penelitian. Populasi yang digunakan pada penelitian ini adalah masyarakat Kecamatan Gambut dengan sampel sebanyak 120 orang responden. Hasil penelitian diuji dengan menggunakan metode uji regresi linear berganda. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian, variabel ekonomi dan kebijakan secara parsial dan simultan memiliki pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap variabel konservasi lingkungan, dimana masyarakat Muslim Gambut memainkan peran penting dalam konservasi lingkungan dengan menjaga

keanekaragaman hayati, dan melestarikan kearifan lokal dalam interaksi sosial dan lingkungan. Kebijakan konservasi lingkungan yang efektif, yang melibatkan semua sektor masyarakat, dapat menyeimbangkan pertumbuhan ekonomi dan kebijakan yang menjadikan kestabilan ekonomi dan perlindungan lingkungan yang lebih baik.

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Introduction

In the ideal guidance, the Muslim community is not only in the bond of brotherhood among Muslims and fellow humans, but also developed in the brotherhood of all God's creations. Thus, a Muslim not only develops an attitude of pre-humanity, but also pre-sacredness. The anthropocentric paradigm of human relations with nature is corrected by Islam. Islam develops ecocentrism towards ecotauhid. In various verses of the Quran (including QS 17:44, 24:41, 61:1, 62:1, and 64:1) it is explained that all creatures are God's creation and always praise Him. All particles of nature have ecological duties to support harmony. Damaging the smallest part of nature will cause fatal damage to the lives of all creatures (QS 30:41). This ecocentrism paradigm becomes a means to ecotauhid, where all parts of nature become signs (ayat) for His existence, power and order (QS 30:21-25 and 37). Islam thus forbids the mistreatment of animals as it forbids the destruction of the environment. Islam is very wise towards the surrounding world because it is born from the goodness and fertility of nature and will return to the soil (QS 7:25; 20:55).

As a manifestation of wisdom towards the environment, Islam teaches concepts that are nuanced in environmental restoration and conservation. These concepts range from *thaharah* (cleanliness and beauty), *zira'ah* (planting and reforestation), *siqayah* (plant care), and *ihya al-mawat* (reviving idle land) (Halmahera et al., 2019). With this concept, every Muslim is encouraged to maintain the condition of nature so that it continues to function optimally ecologically. In addition, the teaching of *hima* (creating and maintaining protected forests), educates every Muslim to maintain the fertility of forests so that there are sources of energy, water and food, both for humans and animals. These concepts clearly teach Islam's partiality towards the environment (Syaukani, 1995). It was a tradition in pre-Prophet Muhammad Arabia that a community (tribe) owned a forest area as a water reserve, firewood, and pasture. They protected and nurtured it together. The forest in question is usually located in a valley between two hills that when it rains will contain water and grow trees. This *hima* tradition was ratified by the Prophet as a publicly owned protected area. In the narration of Abu Dawud and Ahmad, the Prophet asserted that "humans are in partnership in three things, pasture, water, and fire (energy)". The Prophet reformed the ownership of the pre-Prophet era *hima* which was private for certain tribes to become common property. At the time of the Prophet there were *hima* in An-Naqi' and at the time of Umar *hima* were also developed in Sharaf and Rabazah.

However, religion that starts from the norm system or the results of induction thinking is not always in the real world to form a religious society that cares about the environment as taught in environmental fiqh where to realise humans as drivers of conservation and restoration of nature, Islam teaches important things, starting from the natural ideas about heaven, practical matters in the implementation of worship and economic life (Ridwansyah, 2022). Changes in the linearity of religiousness towards alignment with the environment can occur for various reasons, where there are various causes that cause environmental degradation to continue, such as the apathy of some people towards the

environment, understanding and implementation of policies and control of power and economic needs (Schwartz, 2012; Zabidi et al., 2021). These changes cause a shift in values that causes the teachings of conservation and environmental restoration to fade and even almost disappear.

The economic aspect is perhaps the biggest contributor to land conversion to settlements. From preliminary observations, several local residents interviewed said that the high price of land and the increasing number of primary needs that must be met, encourage people to release their land to developers. Another issue related to economic aspects is the division of inheritance. When a head of a family owns a piece of land and dies, the heirs tend to divide the inheritance by releasing it to a buyer.

Policies and regulations that regulate the allocation of land in an area with ecological considerations should play a role in regulating land conversion. Effective policies and power relations can suppress the tendency to change land functions based on considerations of maintaining the environmental carrying capacity of an area. In an initial investigation, the regulations applied and the government's control over peatland areas in the Gambut Sub-district of Banjar Regency are not yet clear. Except that, on the basis of Article 33 paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution, the government issued the Basic Agrarian Law, namely Article 2, Article 6, Article 10, Article 14 and Article 15 and was reinforced by the letter of the Minister of Agrarian Affairs/Head of the National Land Agency Number. 460-1594 on preventing the conversion of technically irrigated paddy fields into dry land. This is complemented by Regulations on land use in general: (a) Circular Letter of the Minister of Home Affairs No. 590/11108/SJ on the Conversion of Agricultural Land to Non-Agricultural Land addressed to all Regional Head Governors throughout Indonesia. (b) Government Regulation No. 16 of 2004 concerning Land Use Management, (c) Banjar District Regulation No. 4 of 2021 concerning the Regional Spatial Plan of Banjar District 2021-2041.

The Minister of Home Affairs Circular Letter Number: 590/11108/SJ on the Conversion of Agricultural Land to Non-Agricultural mandates all Governors to designate these areas in consideration of maintaining the existence of agricultural land to support food and the environment. For Banjar Regency, all sub-districts are required to conserve agricultural land as formulated in Banjar Regency Regional Regulation Number 4 of 2021 concerning the Banjar Regency RTRW.

Geographically, Gambut is part of a sub-district in Banjar District, South Kalimantan Province. As the name implies, this sub-district is an area of land that contains many layers of peat (Norhalimah et al., 2021). Kecamatan Gambut is a lowland area located between the southwest coast of Kalimantan Island and the eastern highlands of Kota Banjarbaru. Unlike typical swamp topography, peat areas are low-lying areas where the topsoil is covered by a kind of matting consisting of fine roots forming an invisible expanse between 1 and 2 metres thick. These fine roots generally come from the accumulation of plant debris, so they contain a high level of organic matter. A common plant that forms this organic material is the "*galam*" tree, a swamp plant typical of Kalimantan.

By nature, peat areas have two benefits: to catch and filter water. Therefore, peat areas act as a buffer against flooding and as a "reservoir" for water during the dry season. However, because it consists of thick fine roots, during the long dry season, this area becomes very prone to fires that cause thick smoke.

Over time, this peat area has gradually shrunk and changed function. The emergence of settlements, whether built privately or through large-scale depletion, has played a serious role in eroding this peat area. The large size of the peat area does not guarantee that it will always have a positive value, but it can be a serious concern on a national and international scale where there are long-term impacts that lead to the environmental sector, especially related to damage to forest, aquatic and environmental resources, poverty, and ineffective policies (Daud, 1997; Suharto & Tando, 2021).

Since 2000 until now, the conversion of agricultural land to residential land has been massive. At the time of this research (March - July 2023) there were 55 housing complexes spread across 4 villages and 2 sub-districts in Gambut Sub-district.

Table 1
Number of Housing in Gambut Sub-district

Region	Total
Kel. Gambut	21
Gambut Barat	3
Kayu Bawang	10
Malintang Baru	8
Malintang	9
Banyu Hirang	4
Total	55

Source: Author's Findings, 2023

Criminal enforcement of the conversion of sustainable food agricultural land in Banjar Regency has actually protected agricultural land by issuing various regulations including in the conversion of agricultural land into housing, where the supervision carried out by the Banjar Regency Regional Government in the protection of sustainable food agricultural land includes reporting, monitoring and evaluation (Andriani, 2019). However, the protection policy is not fully implemented because basically agricultural land can still be converted to realise the public interest and the private interest of the landowner (Permana, 2022). This can occur due to the lack of socialisation and communication between the government and the farmer group community regarding guidance to everyone who is bound by land use, where there are still farmer group communities who are not aware of these regulations, considering that farmer groups are parties who are very much bound by rice fields and are entitled to guidance (Setyawan, 2023). The uncertainty of economic policy poses a threat to environmental sustainability by increasing emission levels (Xue et al., 2022). Therefore, priority areas for conservation are very likely to experience high land use pressure in the future (Piquer-Rodríguez et al., 2018).

Economic factors are also one of the causes of the conversion of paddy fields into housing, which is explained by the rising market price of land and urgent needs. This need influences land conversion. In addition, the transformation of the function of paddy fields into built-up land is caused by uneven population development (Alinda & Sudrajat, 2021). In terms of environmental interests, one of the organisations in Indonesia, Muhammadiyah, is also involved in reviewing state policies as a political advocacy practice. However, the main feature of Muhammadiyah's environmental activism emphasises economic justice rather than ecological development and conservation (Efendi et al., 2021).

The available regulations do not seem to be very powerful. The economic aspect is also often a consideration for landowners to be willing to sell the land. The impact of religious understanding of the need to conserve nature also plays a role, so that peat areas continue to be eroded and it is not impossible that one third will be converted (I Wayan Suja, 2022). Based on this premise, it is necessary to trace the relationship between Muslim communities and environmental conservation and how far regulatory and economic factors can influence it.

Literature Review

A. Economic

Traditional economic theory posits a trade-off between economic growth and environmental quality. Since the early 1990s, a rapidly growing empirical and theoretical literature on the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) has concluded that the relationship between economic growth and the environment can be positive; and hence growth is a prerequisite for environmental improvement (Sukendar, 2013). Often, societies have to choose between economic growth and environmental protection, but this does not mean that economic growth is always bad for the environment. However, economic development does not always have an adverse impact on the environment, this is because economic development can occur in a variety of ways and affect a variety of actions (Jayachandran, 2022).

One of the results shows that economic performance responds to structural reforms and can be achieved more quickly than environmental performance, which takes longer to achieve. The economic performance achieved also serves as an input for subsequent economic performance (a self-stimulating economic system), while environmental performance recovers by itself much more slowly and some of its components cannot recover by themselves (Rapsikevicius et al., 2021). In addition, other studies have shown that there is a strong relationship between a country's economic policy on natural resources and political stability. One of them by Deacon in his research on 120 countries shows that deforestation and land degradation in these countries are caused by a political climate fuelled by market-driven investment. This effect leads to political turmoil that erodes the success of economic development itself or the “wash out effect” (Deacon, 1994).

B. Policy

Policies in environmental conservation are regulations that aim to protect nature. Agricultural conversion is a problem in society along with economic and policy growth (Ikhsan et al., 2021). This conversion is carried out by various interest groups that make business and settlement as the basis, so that there are conflicts between policies and applicable laws and regulations. This affects policy and economy (Ikhsan et al., 2021; Muhammad Nuh dan Suharto Winoto, 2017; Purnaweni, 2014). However, this function change has contributed to local government income and created job vacancies. This conversion is regulated in the legislation of Article 33 paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution concerning the benefits of natural resources.

Land conversion is a change from the original function of part or all of the land area to another function that causes problems (negative impacts) on land potential and the environment. Competition in land use between the agricultural and non-agricultural

sectors is the basis for land conversion that arises due to social and economic phenomena, including limited land resources, population and economic growth.

In addition, the land conversion has caused the area of land used for business to narrow and caused a decline in the welfare of farmers. Agricultural land is not only useful for rice cultivation, but can be a suitable land to accommodate excess runoff water, environmental preservation and flood control. If rice fields are converted into residential areas, hotels and industries, it will automatically affect the surrounding land. With less land to hold water, disasters such as floods will often occur.

C. Muslim Societies and Environmental Conservation

The meaning of conservation is protection, be it of coastal, forest or marine areas. Some also define conservation areas as areas that are not allowed to be disturbed. Nowadays, the meaning of conservation has been expanded to mean “utilisation, preservation or protection”. Conservation can also be interpreted as the process of managing an area so that the cultural meaning contained therein is well preserved (Permatasari et al., 2021).

Conservation of the environment is a human responsibility to preserve life with its various systems and is one of the objectives of sharia, even the highest objective. Conservation is used through sustainable utilisation, protection, preservation, restoration and improvement of the quality of the environment, especially to ensure the welfare of other living beings and humans in a sustainable manner (Rodin, 2017).

Environmental management and conservation efforts are the mandate of every human being, including all components of society that are part of the region itself. The purpose of environmental conservation is to preserve biodiversity, to improve the function of biological communities and ecosystems. So that environmental conservation activities can benefit everyone (Nurhilmiah et al., 2021). Therefore, environmental conservation cannot be separated from the preservation of local wisdom in environmental and social interactions.

Muslim communities have a strong view on the importance of preserving and protecting the environment. This view is influenced by the teachings of Islam, which provides guidance on the responsibilities of humans as khalifah (successor) of Allah on earth. Islam teaches that all living things have their own rights. Muslim societies are encouraged not to cause damage or destruction to plants, animals or the ecosystem as a whole. Animals and plants should be treated with compassion and respect. Islam also teaches the importance of using natural resources wisely and in moderation. Muslims are encouraged to avoid waste, practice recycling, and reduce overconsumption.

Muslim communities are encouraged to avoid actions that cause pollution, including air, water and soil pollution. Islam teaches the importance of keeping the environment clean and harmonious, appreciating the beauty of nature as a manifestation of Allah's greatness. Muslims are encouraged to preserve the beauty of nature, including maintaining gardens, parks and green spaces. They are also reminded of their responsibilities as God's vicegerents on earth, expected to behave responsibly and play an active role in maintaining and improving the environment.

Based on the analysis and previous studies, the hypotheses used include:

H1. Economy has a significant effect on environmental conservation in Gambut Sub-district.

H2. Policy has a significant effect on environmental conservation in Gambut Subdistrict.

H3. Economy and policy have a significant effect on conservation and environment in Gambut Sub-district.

Research Methods

This research method is quantitative which is used to examine certain populations or samples, through quantitative/statistical data analysis, which aims to test the hypothesis that has been determined by the survey method (Sugiyono, 2017). The survey method uses a questionnaire as a tool to obtain information relating to the matters under study by attracting a certain number of samples or respondents. With the areas in Gambut Sub-district, Banjar Regency, including Gambut Village, West Gambut Village, Malintang Village, Malintang Baru Village, Kayu Bawang Village, and Banyu Hiranng Village as a Muslim population, but in this case the sample is Muslim people who have lived for more than 20 years in Gambut Sub-district. With the acquisition of data, namely primary data is data that is directly obtained in the object of research, while secondary data is data that reinforces research data.

The data was tested using validity test to measure the validity/effectiveness of the questionnaire. Reliability test as a measurement place of a questionnaire to see indicators of variables. Then classical assumption testing, namely normality, multicollinearity test, heteroscedasticity test, also the multiple linear regression test to answer the hypothesis and the coefficient of determination test (R²).

Results and Discussions

A. Result

This study uses a normality test with the *Kolmogorov-Smirnov* statistical test method to determine whether a regression model is normally distributed. If the significance value is greater than the error degree value, which is 5% or 0.05, then the data tested is free from normality problems or normally distributed.

Table 2

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality Test

<i>Kolmogorov-Smirnov</i> Test	Unstrandardized Residual
Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)	0.200

Source: Data processed, 2023

Multicollinearity test is used to determine if a regression model has a correlation between independent variables. A data can be said to be free from multicollinearity problems if the tolerance value is more than 0.10 and the VIF value is less than 10.

Table 3

Multicollinearity Test

Variables	Tolerance	VIF
Economic	0.816	1.225

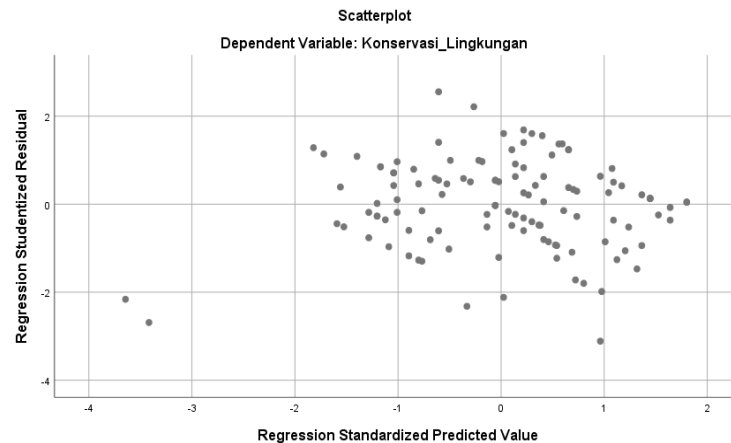
Policy	0.816	1.225
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Source: Data processed, 2023

A regression model can be said to be free from symptoms of heteroscedasticity if in the scatterplot image pattern the data points spread around the number 0 or do not collect only above and below. The distribution of data points should not form a wavy pattern and the distribution of data points is not patterned.

Figure 1

Heteroscedasticity Test with Scatterplot Figure



Source: Data processed, 2023

Table 4

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship between Variables	T-Count	F-Count	Sig.	Description
I	$X1 \rightarrow Y$	3.121		0.002	Significant (H1 accepted)
II	$X2 \rightarrow Y$	8.447		0.000	Significant (H2 accepted)
III	$X1, X2 \rightarrow Y$		63.492	0.000	Significant (H3 accepted)

Source: Data processed, 2023

Based on the test results, it can be seen that all independent variables, namely the economy and policy, have a partial influence on the dependent variable, namely environmental conservation. Based on the test on the economic variable, it can be seen that the significance value of 0.002 is smaller than alpha 0.05 and the policy variable with a significance value of 0.000 is smaller than alpha 0.05. It can be concluded that the economic and policy variables partially have a significant influence on the environmental conservation variable, so the hypothesis H_a is accepted and H_0 is rejected.

In addition, all independent variables (economic and policy) when run simultaneously (together) will significantly affect the dependent variable (environmental conservation). Based on the test, it can be seen that the significance value of 0.000 is smaller than

alpha 0.05. It can be concluded that the economic and policy variables simultaneously have a significant influence on the environmental conservation variable, so the hypothesis H_a is accepted and H_0 is rejected.

The coefficient of determination (R^2) test serves to measure the ability of a regression model to explain the dependent variation.

Table 5
Coefficient of Determination Test

Model	R	<i>R Square</i>	<i>Adjusted R Squared</i>
1	0.721	0.520	0.512

Source: Data processed, 2023

The R Square value in the coefficient of determination test is 0.520 or 52% of the variation of the dependent variable (environmental conservation) can be explained by the independent variation (economy and policy) quite well. While the remaining 48% is explained by other causes.

B. Discussions

The purpose of environmental conservation is to conserve biodiversity, to improve the functioning of biological communities and ecosystems. So that environmental protection or conservation measures can benefit everyone, especially the Muslim community in Gambut Sub-district, Banjar District. (Nurhilmiah et al., 2021) Environmental conservation cannot be separated from the preservation of local wisdom in social and environmental interactions and making the benefits of land use. In this case, the preservation of local wisdom is certainly inseparable from the role of the Gambut Muslim community, which in fact has a strong pedigree in agricultural expertise, so that with this expertise the Gambut area owned by the Muslim community once earned the title of "rice granary". However, over time, the Gambut Muslim community shifted the function of the land, which was basically influenced by regulatory and economic aspects.

The aspect of rules (regulations) issued by the central and local governments in environmental conservation is a regulation that aims to protect nature, the phenomenon of land use change is also part of the process of transforming the national economic structure. Economic growth and population concentration in urban areas require more space outside the city for settlement and economic activities. As a result, peripheral areas dominated by agricultural land are converted to non-agricultural land at different rates across periods and regions. However, there are weaknesses in the regulatory aspect itself related to the issue of legal force, sanctions for violations, and the accuracy of land objects that are prohibited from conversion, causing the conversion of agricultural land.

The economic system and the environmental system are two interconnected things where exploitation and degradation of the environment and natural resources have become a cycle. Therefore, economic policies that are market friendly and environmentally friendly or commonly referred to as a dual approach are needed so that disruptions to the environmental system due to economic activities can be accommodated in the structure of economic policy. So that the economic system will

become resource friendly and the environmental system can adjust to market demand while still paying attention to feedback on environmental degradation (Garnella et al., 2020; Prasetyo et al., 2021).

A well-planned economic structure can revolutionise environmental performance as study findings highlight that democratic countries have better macroeconomic stability (Zhao & Madni, 2021, p. 7).

To support all aspects of a balanced economic and environmental system, cooperation and partnership as well as active participation between the government, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, and civil society are required, including inter-agency cooperation, international cooperation programmes, and community involvement in environmental protection decisions to achieve effective environmental protection. The various ways that the Gambut Muslim community, of course, from the economic and regulatory aspects, influence this change in function change, which makes environmental protection weak.

Attempts to achieve effective environmental protection require the active participation of the public, government, non-governmental organisations and the private sector in policy-making related to environmental protection, including environmental education, sustainable resource management, implementation and other specific measures. Strict environmental policies, the use of environmentally friendly technologies and personal awareness to reduce the ecological footprint in daily life.

Mandatory policies such as environmental policy control have the ability to significantly reduce the negative impact caused by the environment and promote the improvement of ecological efficiency. To achieve a high level of ecological efficiency, policy controls must be accompanied by clear penalties (Qin et al., 2021, hlm. 11).

Frankel and Rose found that trade, democracy, environmental policies, GDP, and environmental quality are correlated with each other. They found that people can demand better environmental policies and better regulatory systems in free democratic institutions (Frankel & Rose, 2005; Zhao & Madni, 2021, p. 7).

Better policies are a reliable way to promote stronger economic development in terms of environmental protection. As economies develop, the supply and demand for policies increase. In the first mechanism, the government's ability to make and implement regulations increases. The second mechanism is that richer societies tend to prioritise a healthy environment. In addition, it is likely that economic growth will lead to increased consumption and production, which in turn causes pollution and depletes resources (Jayachandran, 2022, p. 248).

The combination of lack of active participation from the Gambut Muslim community, high economic demands, low skills in agriculture, lack of knowledge especially in the field of religion and lack of regulations that protect the environment are the main factors in the conversion of the environment. When these factors are integrated, a pattern is created where land continues to be converted for short-term economic gain without regard to long-term environmental sustainability.

Conclusions

In this case, the Gambut Muslim community is the subject of the research and plays an important role in the knowledge of environmental conservation, which is to maintain biodiversity and improve the function of biological communities and ecosystems. One of the main objectives of environmental conservation is to maintain local wisdom in social and environmental interactions and generate benefits from land use.

Environmental conservation policies are policies made by central and local governments to protect nature, land use shifts, and national economic transformation. With economic growth and greater concentration of population in cities, greater space is required outside of cities for settlements and various economic activities.

Exploitation and degradation of natural resources and the environment have been ongoing for many years, as the economic system and the environmental system are interconnected. In order for environmental system disturbances caused by economic activities to be accommodated in the economic policy structure, market- and environment-friendly economic policies, or a dual approach, are needed.

A well-planned economic structure can revolutionise environmental performance as study findings highlight that democratic countries have better macroeconomic stability. All parties, including governments, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, and civil society, should be actively involved in achieving effective environmental protection. Mandatory environmental policies, such as environmental policy control, can improve environmental efficiency and reduce negative impacts.

Better policies are a reliable way to promote stronger economic growth in environmental protection. With economic growth, supply and demand policies increase environmental stability and have a positive impact on overall economic development.

Addressing land conversion requires a multifaceted approach, including education and skills development, strengthening religious and ethical frameworks for environmental protection, implementing and enforcing strict land use regulations, and managing economic growth to balance development with sustainability.

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