

ISLAMIC BANKS: SUSTAINABILITY, INTEGRATED REPORTING & RELIGION

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Abstract

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Over the last few decades a growing awareness of the role of firms in society has emerged and, consequently, a call for a different approach towards accounting and accountability. Among various proposals, Integrated Reporting (IR) represent the more recent and ambitious one, even if some critical matters have to be dealt with by companies involved in its implementation. In effect, some Authors have already highlighted that it is necessary to introduce a cultural change in order to develop a new approach with reference to the measurement and communication (Songini et al., 2015). In this sense, in recent years critical and interdisciplinary research has significantly challenged the predominantly technical and a-political view of business and accounting. This has led to growing consensus that the most valuable insights are gained from studying practices in the organizational and broader social settings in which they operate, i.e. their cultural context. On the basis of the above, Islam does represent a strongly important field of study for the cultural context into which IR could develop. In effect, in Islamic thought, it is believed that Adam, the progenitor of the human race and Islamic prophet-was appointed Trusteeship (khalifa) or guardian of the planet Earth; in addition, a concept unique to man is amana or trust (Rizk, 2014). Allah offers amana to the heavens, to the earth, to the mountains - to the rest of creation - who all refused; only mankind was foolish enough to accept it. A trust entails one who entrusts and a trustee. Qur'an is embodied with the principles of moderation, balance and conservation, which are the core of sustainable development and provide a framework for discernment, without which there would arguably be no limits to waste, extravagance or greed both individual as well as corporate. Further exploration does suggest that the accountant, and hence accounting, is actually given a very key role. The person that is described as accountant or Muhtasib in Islam is the one responsible for making sure that business is not harming the community. Tawheed (unity) stimulates the desiderata of an explicit public commitment to reasonable and comprehensible accounting - full and relevant disclosure - in the public interest, as such an explicit commitment becomes a charge in relation to which those formally regulating accounting can be held accountable. At the same time, Islam encourages humankind to experience lazkiyah (self-correction) through active participation in life, since only behaving ethically in the materialistic life (duniya) Muslims prove their worth to Allah (Hassan, 2016). The paper is mostly theoretical, yet it offers fruitful practical insights since only a truthful assessment of the cultural pattern, as such as Islam, can lead to a conscious approach towards sustainability. This paper offers insights for future research on the broad field of social and environmental issues, as well as Integrated Reporting, since it suggests to take always in account - when addressing issues and potentialities of non financial reporting - the cultural pattern.

Keywords: Sustainability, Integrated Reporting, Cultural Environment. Islam

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades a growing awareness of the role of firms in society has emerged and, consequently, a call for a different approach towards accounting and accountability.

Among various proposals, Integrated Reporting (also, IR) represent the more recent and ambitious one (Songini et al., 2015), even if some critical matters have to be dealt with by companies involved in its implementation.

For instance, an Author (Flower, 2014) presents a comprehensive analysis of the IIRC project and arrives at the pessimistic conclusion that it will fall substantially short of its original objectives. Flower's critique is based on a comprehensive content analysis of key IIRC documents. His analysis identifies a shift away from its founding sustainability infused objectives to a weak, diluted, business-as-usual reporting framework embedded within an explicit capitalist ideology.

In doing so, Flower demonstrates that Integrated Reporting in 2014 is a far cry from the Integrated Reports envisaged in 2009.

At the same time, another Author (Adams, 2015) contests Flower's argument (that is, the IIRC's proposals will have little impact on reporting practice) since they already are having an impact.

Over a hundred businesses in fact have paid to be involved in the pilot programme and according to Adams many others are adopting elements of Integrated Reporting and internationally regulation is increasingly requiring disclosure of, for example, strategy, risks and business model information in annual reports and Operating and Financial Reviews.

In this sense, according to Adams: "I believe that to a large extent, their impact on reporting practice depends on those critical of the status quo both engaging with practice and ensuring their voices are raised and heard - as Flower is doing".

This paper, moving from the fruitful and growing debate about the role and the major issues of Integrated Reporting, poses the question of the mutual intersection between Integrated Reporting itself and the cultural context, with particular reference to religion.

To the best of my knowledge the research is amongst the first in the field, whilst I have taken fruitful inspiration from Abeydeera et al., (2016) and their analysis of the intersection between sustainability and religion; in this sense the results of this paper, even if preliminary, shed some lights on this significant matter.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2. Develops the main literature, Section 3. Discusses the findings of the case studies; Section 4. Concludes, whilst Appendices contain the figures commented along in the paper.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The case of Integrated Reporting

That said, rationales and motives of IR have been studied, as such the institutional context and stakeholder theory.

Using the words of some Authors (Dragu et al., 2014) "the vision of Integrated Reporting has developed on the grounds of novel theorizations.

This section highlights the most relevant theories for Integrated Reporting. Mainly, there are three theoretical circles that surround Integrated Reporting initiatives (Chatelain & Morrain, 2012): stakeholder theory versus shareholder theory, (2) new institutionalism and legitimacy theory and (3) innovation diffusion theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Suchman, 1995; Rogers, 1962, 1995; Zaltman, Duncan, & Holbeck, 1973). The diffusion and adoption theory for organizational practices (Berg & Jensen, 2012) originated from the institutional theory, as the latter states the influence of certain factors in the practices adopted by corporations (Jackson and Apostolakou, 2010; Matten and Moon, 2008; Guerreiro et al., 2006; Aguilera and Jackson, 2003; Oliver, 1991; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). According to Eccles et al., (2010), Integrated Reporting represents the reconciliation of two main theories, namely: shareholder theory and stakeholder theory. The theory of shareholder primacy states that the main objective of companies should be to maximize shareholder's value. From the perspective of this theory, the role of Integrated Reporting would be to approach environmental, social and governance issues that are considered to influence the value of the company".

Taking into account the points above, potential and multiple relationships between IR and its cultural context have now to be addressed as indicated below.

2.2. IR and religion

Some Authors have already highlighted that it is necessary to introduce a cultural change in order to develop a new approach with reference to the measurement and communication (Songini et al., 2015).

In this sense, in recent years critical and interdisciplinary research has significantly challenged the predominantly technical and a-political view of business and accounting. This has led to growing consensus that the most valuable insights are gained from studying practices in the organizational and broader social settings in which they operate, i.e. their cultural context.

Some Authors have already included in their agenda the role of religion for sustainability reasons: consider for instance Abeydeera et al., (2016) according to which "previous studies examining influences on corporate sustainability reporting have tended to focus on the influence of global initiatives such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) (Brown et al., 2009; Buhr et al., 2014; Milne and Gray, 2013). Despite these global initiatives encompassing well-meaning and beneficial components, they can be argued to be primarily "self-serving, and self-absorbing and very rarely systems-changing" (McIntosh, 2015, p. 10; Buhr et al, 2014; Milne and Gray, 2013). Dealing with fundamental systems issues requires transformational thinking and action (Ehrenfeld and Hoffman, 2013). It would appear that approaches that are based on moral values to foster sustainability offer greater possibility in this regard (Bouckaert and Zsolnai, 2012; Ehrenfeld and Hoffman, 2013)".

On the basis of the above, Islam does represent a strongly important field of study for the cultural context into which IR could develop.

In effect, in Islamic thought, it is believed that Adam, the progenitor of the human race and Islamic prophet was appointed Trustee (khalifa) or guardian of the planet Earth; in addition, a concept unique to man is *amana* or trust (Rizk, 2014).

Allah offers *amana* to the heavens, to the earth, to the mountains - to the rest of creation - who all refused; only mankind was foolish enough to accept it. A trust entails one who entrusts and a trustee. Qur'an is embodied with the principles of moderation, balance and conservation, which are the core of sustainable development and provide a framework for discernment, without which there would arguably be no limits to waste, extravagance or greed both individual as well as corporate (Rizk, 2014).

Further exploration does suggest that the accountant, and hence accounting, is actually given a very key role. The person that is described as accountant or *Muhtasib* in Islam is the one responsible for making sure that business is not harming the community (Kamla et al., 2006).

Taw heed (unity) stimulates the desiderata of an explicit public commitment to reasonable and comprehensible accounting - full and relevant disclosure - in the public interest; as such an explicit commitment becomes a charge in relation to which those formally regulating accounting can be held accountable.

In these terms, social responsibility in Islam is multifaceted and this can be clearly seen from the Prophet's hadith:

'Abdullah ibn 'Umar reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Every one of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock. The leader of the people is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects: *Amana* is the guardian of his family and is responsible for his subjects, a woman is the guardian of her husband's home and of his children and is responsible for them, and the slave of a man is a guardian of his master's property and is responsible for it. Surely, every one of you is a shepherd and responsible for his flock". (Shih Bukhari, No. 7138, 1229).

Moreover, with specific reference to sustainable development, Hassan (2016) suggests that the Islamic approach is more agreeable to environmental protection and the issues associated with environmental and sustainable development have moral, ethical and social responsibilities, so that "the businesses should have on intense commitment to Islamic ethics in justice and welfare of human beings".

2.3. Visuals, accounting and sustainability

The theme of visuals in the field of accounting and sustainability has been increasingly studied: consider for instance Diouf et al., (2014), who state that "four strategies are intended to emphasize good news by manipulating verbal or digital information: thematic manipulation, visual and structural manipulation, performance comparisons, and choice of earnings numbers".

According to Fantini (2017) "seeing is one of the main sensory experiences for knowing and for generating meanings of it. To acknowledge this, visual research methods are increasingly popular in social sciences".

In this sense, visual methodologies for

accounting and accountability have been already largely studied by some Authors (J. Davison, S. Warren, V. Beattie, for instance) who have classified some of them as "visual rhetoric" - that is, visuals are an art of persuasion and have a performative function using antithesis and repetition (Davison et al, 2017) - and who acknowledge the utility of visuals in "recognising the socio-political context of images generated for the purposes of impression management and [...] Influence stakeholder perceptions of value and self-worth" (Davison et al, 2017).

3. METHODOLOGY, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Methodology

The paper comments on the Integrated Report, as of 2015 (the latest available to date), of Al Rajhi Bank, Saudi Arabia, Shahjalal Islami Bank (Limited), Bangladesh, and Al Baraka Bank, South Africa.

The methodology is qualitative, since it is grounded on a case study approach, and it encompasses a visual analysis of some figures included in the Integrated Reports.

3.2. A description of the banks

According to its website, **Al Rajhi Bank** "was founded in 1957, and is one of the largest banks in Saudi Arabia, with over 9,600 employees and \$88 billion in assets.

The bank is headquartered in Riyadh, and has over 600 branches, primarily in Saudi Arabia, but also in Kuwait, and Jordan, with a subsidiary in Malaysia.

The bank was started by four brothers, Sulaiman, Saleh, Abdullah, and Mohamed, of the Al Rajhi family, one of the wealthiest families in Saudi Arabia.

The bank initially began as a group of banking and commercial operations which, in 1978, joined together under the umbrella of the Al Rajhi Trading and Exchange Company.

The company changed to a joint stock company in 1987, and after two years was rebranded as the Al Rajhi Banking and Investment Corporation. In 2006, the bank rebranded itself as Al Rajhi Bank. It is traded on the Saudi Arabian Stock Exchange (Tadawul), and around 75% of their shares are publicly owned. Al Rajhi family members are the bank's largest shareholders.

In 2006, after nearly 50 years of operation solely within Saudi Arabia, the bank launched in Malaysia, signifying its first foray into international banking.

Following the Saudi business model which adheres closely to the deeply rooted Islamic banking principles, the Sharia-compliant banking group is planning to be instrumental in bridging the gap between modern financial demands and intrinsic Islamic values, for the numerous industry standards and development in Malaysia.

Further regional expansion has seen the 2010 opening of a national office, men's branch and separate women's branch in Kuwait.

It is traded on the Saudi Arabian Stock Exchange (Tadawul), and around 45% of their shares are publicly owned. Al Rajhi Bank offers a variety of

banking services such as deposits, loans, investment advice, securities trading, remittances, credit cards, and consumer financing.

All services are offered according to Islamic requirements. The bank has won numerous awards for its Middle East operations.

In September 2016, Al Rajhi became the first bank in Saudi Arabia to partner with the Ministry of Housing, participating in the government's plans to increase home ownership by offering mortgages funded in part by the state. Traditionally, the bank had focused on consumer banking, but had begun diversifying its revenues with plans to adjust focus towards mid-corporate and small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) business as the Saudi government implemented its broader social reform agenda and the National Transformation Programme (NTP).

As of 2016, 70 percent of Al Rajhi's assets and 55 to 60 percent of its revenue were generated from consumer banking and the bank has an 18 percent share of the mortgage market in the Kingdom".

Shahjalal Islami Bank Limited, as it is written in its website, "commenced its commercial operation in accordance with principle of Islamic Shariah on the 10th May 2001 under the Bank Companies Act, 1991.

During these years the company has diversified its service coverage by opening new branches at different strategically important locations across the country offering various service products both investment & deposit. Islamic Banking, in essence, is not only interest-free banking business, it carries deal wise business product thereby generating real income and thus boosting GDP of the economy.

Shahjalal Islami Bank provides financial aid through rural branch establishing agro-based industry and to produce agrarian crops under the rural investment programme. The bank also plays an important role to improve lifestyle creating new field of income and generating employment opportunities through investment in industrial sectors. As a part of social liabilities,

Shahjalal Islami Bank provides free treatment of insolvent and needy people, distributes eatable materials in poverty-stricken region, endows financial aid to the poor but meritorious students and contributes in various public welfare works. In order to perform such activities the bank found 'Shahjalal Islami Bank Foundation'.

A deal has been signed up with Western Union for reaching migrated labour's money to their relatives with swiftly and in short time."

In line with its website "**Al Baraka Bank**, registered in South Africa since 1989, pioneered Islamic banking in this country in response to an identified need for a system of banking which adhered to Islamic economic principles. The bank, with its Head Office in Durban and a strategically located national branch network, is South Africa's only fully-fledged Islamic bank and is a subsidiary of the international Al Baraka Banking Group B.S.C., which has established one of the largest international Islamic banking groups in the world [...] The South African subsidiary's Al Baraka Banking Group linkage provides it with the springboard for significant growth potential and assists in the positioning of Al Baraka Bank at the leading edge of Islamic banking in this country. Al Baraka Bank operates in an important and rapidly growing niche market. Since inception, the bank has shown

impressive growth and the continued increasing demand for Al Baraka products and services is considered as being a direct consequence of its Shariah compliance. In this regard, the bank enjoys the support of regular internal Shariah audits, whilst its Shariah Department works closely with an Independent Shariah Supervisory Board to ensure compliance with Islamic economic principles.

Al Baraka's growth and development is attributed to its niche market's faith and confidence in the bank's ability to implement and further develop a viable alternative to interest-based banking in South Africa. The bank's track-record to date is indicative of a growing acceptance and confidence in an alternate system of banking in South Africa, creating the ideal platform for Al Baraka Bank to increase its footprint in South Africa's Islamic financial sector".

3.3. The reasons declared for issuing an integrated report (2015)

According to the Integrated Report of **Al Rajhi Bank**, as of 2015, "this publication - 'Al Rajhi Bank in 2015' - is an Integrated Report. It complements our Annual Report 2015 while communicating coherently the relationships of the many aspects of our business, such as strategy, governance, performance and prospects in the context of creating value over time. The underlying concepts that provide the structure of this Integrated Report are discussed in the section on Business Model commencing on page 17. It is a new approach that aims to engage our readers more effectively. By integrating both financial reporting and sustainability reporting, we bring into focus the broader concept of value creation and capital formation - a recurrent theme that runs throughout this Report. In preparing this report we have drawn on concepts, principles and guidance given in the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Sustainability Reporting Guidelines G4 (www.globalreporting.org), The International Integrated Reporting Framework (www.theiirc.org) and the Smart Integrated Reporting Methodology. We have used digital technology to serve the information needs of our diverse stakeholders. The print version is thus complemented by an interactive online report and a summary report for smartphones. Report Boundary The overall boundary of this Report comprises Al Rajhi Bank ('Bank') and its subsidiaries (together referred to as the 'Group', detailed in Note 1 on page 99). Key financial aspects are discussed in the context of the Group (consolidated), while unless otherwise stated the non-financial aspects are discussed in the context of the Bank and its operations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The Bank's operations in the KSA dominate Group performance. Our reporting focuses on aspects that are material or important. It is an assessment based on the extent to which they may substantively affect the Bank's ability to create value over the short, medium and long term. Compliance This Report covers the 12-month period from 1 January to 31 December 2015, and is consistent with our usual annual reporting cycle for financial and sustainability reporting. The information contained herein is in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations and standards as well as guidelines for

voluntary disclosures. Additional details are given in the Compliance Report (page 77), Financial Statements and the Notes thereon (pages 94 to 161) and in the Independent Auditors' Report (page 92). We are aware of the social and environmental impacts of our actions. The Bank adopts a precautionary approach across the Group with regard to sustainability before embarking on new ventures and initiatives. We are fully compliant with all local regulatory compliance requirements having in place best in class systems and risk management processes".

According to the Integrated Report of **Shahjalal Islami Bank** as of 2015, which is more concise than the preceding Report, "the primary purpose of this integrated report is to explain to providers of financial capital how an organization creates value over time.

However, an integrated report benefits all stakeholders interested in an organization's ability to create value over time, including employees, customers, suppliers, business partners, local communities, legislators, regulators and policymakers.

An integrated report aims to provide insight about the resources and relationships used and affected by an organization collectively referred to as 'the capitals'. It seeks to explain how the organization interacts with the external environment and the capitals to create value over the short, medium and long term.

The capitals are categorized in the international framework as financial, manufactured, intellectual, human, social & relationship and natural capital".

That said, it is noteworthy that when it presents its Integrated Report, both Banks do not mention explicitly any element which could bring the readers attention towards religious issues.

For instance, their publications aim to (1) communicate and to (2) integrate the relationships of the many aspects of the business within society: and these *desiderata* are not different from companies located in non Islamic countries.

At the same time, the fact that information is compliant with "all applicable laws, regulations and standards as well as guidelines for voluntary disclosures" and the awareness of the social and environmental impacts of the Bank's actions are routinely described in the majority of Integrated Reports.

For **Al Baraka Bank**, on the contrary, "the integrated annual report aims to offer an understandable and succinct overview of the past performance and future prospects of Al Baraka Bank, detailing its company profile, a 10-year review of salient details, its directorate and administration, joint statement by the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer and material issues it faces in terms of human resources, information technology, governance, sustainability, compliance and adherence to Shari'ah principles".

In doing so, the Bank explicitly declares from the very beginning its compliance and adherence to Shari'a principles, differently from the other two.

A closer analysis of some parts (sentences, words and images covered in the Appendices) of the Integrated Reports could depict a more articulated scenery.

3.4. Sentences and words

I have chosen from the Integrated Reports, as of 2015, some words which are commonly used and referred to in the Islamic context (Shari'a or Shari'ah; Islamic; Islam) and I have extracted the sentences they are included in (Kamla et al, 2013).

The results are as follows.

Shari'a

It is mentioned 38, 76 and 87 times in the Integrated Report of Al Rajhi Bank, Shahjalal Islami Bank and Al Baraka Bank respectively.

Islamic

It is mentioned 29, 45 and 80 times in the Integrated Report of Al Rajhi Bank, Shahjalal Islami Bank and Al Baraka Bank respectively.

Islam

It is mentioned 4 times in the Integrated Report of Al Rajhi Bank, while it is never expressed in the Integrated Report of Shahjalal Islami Bank and Al Baraka Bank.

Apart from (i) being intertwined in some sentences and (ii) some conventional expressions, the words mentioned above contain nevertheless some elements which offer an interesting perspective upon the IR in Islam, as it is and as it could be fostered in future research.

For instance, the first two Banks admit that their approach towards IR is driven by their "Islamic culture", as well as their products are influenced by "Islamic teachings" and they are "Shari'a compliant"; moreover a Shari'ah awareness is stimulated and developed "with motivation" by the Banks towards their counterparts.

Furthermore, the Integrated Report of Al Rajhi Bank mentions the item "modesty", "humility" and "humble" 2, 3 and 3 times respectively; likewise, the Integrated Report of Shahjalal Islami Bank contains some excerpts from the Qur'an and it systematically asks for Allah to help the Bank, for instance, to "maximize the value for all stakeholders in coming days".

These words, even if they do not exclusively pertain to the Islamic culture, as well as the invocation to Allah, are commonly in use in Islam and they are almost always excluded in an Integrated Report prepared without consideration of the Islamic religion.

At the same time, the conspicuous use of words and their repetition could be interpreted as a narrative rhetoric argument.

The case of Al Baraka Bank is noteworthy as well, since its Integrated Report includes a huge repetition of the words above (both "Shari'a" and "Islamic" are mentioned more than the sum of the other two Reports) yet the Report uses them in a formal tone without going further in the role of religion, as Al Rajhi Bank and Shahjalal Islami Bank do on the opposite.

3.5. Images

The Integrated Report of **Al Rajhi Bank** contains n. 6 images at the end of 6 parts of the report, which are presented in the Appendices.

The images as above are depicted with Islamic signs and notation, as they are rooted in the Islamic culture, and they are placed clearly at the end of

each Section as a closing remark; moreover, apart from some conventional hints of Integrated Reports and IR as well, they explicitly convey specific hints of Islamic religion and cultural environment, as “being open and honest” and “being humble in thought, word and deed”.

The Integrated Report of **Shahjalal Islami Bank** contains n. 7 images at the end of 7 parts of the report, which are presented below.

Different from the Integrated Report by Rajhi Bank, Shahjalal Bank depicts figures taken from a pastoral and reassuring natural landscape, which could be easily appreciated by a non-Islamic reader as well.

That said, however, the quotations refer always to the Qur'an and they discuss mainly the matter of “riba” (usury), the benefits of honest work and the ethical progress; in other words, the conversation retrieves some crucial points of Islam, which do not explicitly come to the surface from the analysis of the figures.

Since the Integrated Reports make a large use of the repetition of religious concepts and images, an issue of narrative and visual rhetoric, as anticipated before, is present for the first two Banks.

Conversely, Integrated Report of **Al Baraka Bank** does not include either any images or any religious belief, in line with the narrative parts as described above.

A comprehensive assessment of the main evidence extracted from the Integrated Reports of Al Rajhi Bank and Shahjalal Islami Bank Limited, as of 2015, is now necessary, since the importance of the results obtained – in terms of words, sentences and images connected to the Islamic religion – is debatable.

The formal presence and the influence of the Islamic thought is probably scarce (the number of words and sentences which are strongly related to the Islamic culture is in effect limited, as well as the contribution of the images) so I could adopt the words of Abeydeera (2016) in the case of sustainability reporting and Buddha, since “Buddhism would seem to have the potential to inform sustainability – yet, there appear barriers to its application and representation in the corporate world. It would seem that global institutions which are dominant in relation to reporting limit the potential for local institutions that have the potential to transform business-as-usual” and again “global standardization in the form of powerful global institutions poses a challenge to incorporating and representing locally prevalent institutions in corporate sustainability reporting”.

In other words, institutional theory drives companies to prepare standardized reports and, in doing so, the truly positive and inspiring impact of IR is reduced as long as “standardized and commodified information in itself cannot be a

strong instrument for empowering or mobilizing social action” (Brown 2009).

At the same time, the results of this research (even if it is in its infancy) induce to adopt a more substantial approach: the paucity of citations of Islamic culture, in fact, is mitigated by the relevance of some of them.

For instance: Islamic culture and teachings do inspire the Integrated Report of the Banks, according to the Bank itself, and this is explicitly declared in the report; modesty and humility are mentioned and depicted in images; some passages of the Qur'an are mentioned in pivotal parts of the Reports.

Hence, a contribution of the Islamic culture to the preparation of the Integrated Reports is noticeable and it is disclosed in the Reports as well.

On the contrary, the importance of religion is certainly lower in the case of Al Baraka Bank, since the explicit mention of Islamic concepts is only formal and the Report does not include any images: I suggest this is mainly due to the country of incorporation of that bank, which operates in a non totally Islamic country as it is South Africa.

If such reflection is correct, then the impact of religion on Integrated Reporting should be measured according to the specific country of incorporation of each company, since the weight of an Islamic country is strongly different from that of a secular one, in which Islam is present yet not totalizing.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This paper offers insights for future research on the broad field of social and environmental issues, as well as Integrated Reporting, since it suggests to consider explicitly and to tackle – when addressing issues and potentialities of non financial reporting – the cultural and religious pattern, as such Islam.

At the same time this paper is preliminary and exploratory (it studies only three Reports using a case study approach) and it is addressed only towards the financial industry: fruitful avenues of research could foster larger samples with different religious environments.

Moreover, as already highlighted by some Authors (Kamla et al, 2013) with reference to social reporting and Islamic Banks, even if these institutions are “keen to link their activities to Shari'ah principles” not all their claims are supported by significant disclosure reflecting their actual practices (Laine, 2009), so another stream of research could be the measurement of the rhetoric instilled in their reports.

Furthermore, the relationship between religion and country should be clearly assessed, since I suspect the more the role of religion in the country the more intense the emphasis of religion in the Integrated Report.







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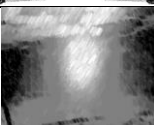
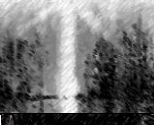
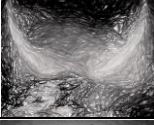

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APPENDICES

Images from Integrated Report (2015) of Al Rajhi Bank

Where: Message from the Chairman. Title: Care for Society. Subtitle: Contributing to a better tomorrow. Figure: below.	
Where: Business Model. Title: A passion to serve. Subtitle: Anticipating and addressing customer needs, to deliver results that go beyond expectations. Figure: below.	
Where: Management Discussion and Analysis. Title: Integrity and transparency. Subtitle: Being open and honest while maintaining the highest standards of corporate and personal ethics. Figure: below.	
Where: Stewardship. Title: Meritocracy. Subtitle: Defining, differentiating and reinforcing excellence in people. Figure: below.	
Where: Identity. Title: Modest and humility. Subtitle: Being humble in thought, word and deed. Figure: below.	
Where: Financial Report. Title: Solution oriented. Subtitle: Helping our customers achieve their objectives through effective and efficient solutions. Figure: below.	

Images from Integrated Report (2015) of Shahjalal Islami Bank

Where: Preface. Title: Messages from the Holy Qur'an. Allah will destroy Riba (usury) and will give increase for Sadaqaat (deeds of charity, alms, etc.) And Allah likes not the disbelievers, sinners. Figure: below.	
Where: Preface. Title: Door to Ethical progression. Figure: below.	
Where: Board of Directors. Title: The truthful merchant (is rewarded by being ranked) on the Day of Resurrection with prophets, veracious souls, martyrs. Figure: below.	
Where: Management and executives. Title: O you who believe! Be afraid of Allah and give up what remains (due to you) from Riba (usury) from now onward, if you are believers. Figure: below.	
Where: Five years financials. Title: May Allah be pleased with him. The Prophet said: nobody has ever eaten a better than that which one was earned by working with one's own hands. The Prophet of Allah, David, upon him prayer and peace, used to eat from the earnings of his manual work. Figure: below.	
Where: Report of the Director. Title: Allah will destroy Riba (usury) and will give increase for Sadaqaat (deeds of charity, alms, etc.) and Allah likes not the disbelievers, sinners. Figure: below.	
Where: Reports. Title: Islamic banking is a form of banking that is harmonious with the goodness of humanity. Figure: below.	