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The University of Manchester
Sustainable Consumption Institute

**MATERIALISING
SUSTAIN
ABILITIES**

re-imagining futures

Challenging assumptions, enabling inclusivity

A report on research about
environmental sustainability conducted
with Somali residents of Moss Side



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of a study conducted in 2018 by researchers from the Sustainable Consumption Institute (SCI) at the University of Manchester in collaboration with members of the Somali community. The main aims were:

- To learn the environmental concerns of Somali-origin residents of Moss Side, a ward in the City of Manchester.
- To explore what motivates and inhibits the engagement of these residents with household practices that reduce environmental impact, such as water and energy conservation and waste recycling.

The research was conducted in the context of growing attention to the role that all households play in meeting ambitions to reduce society's negative impact on the natural environment and climate system. The promotion of 'pro-environmental behaviour' features prominently in environmental policy and campaigning, and includes such things as energy and water conservation, recycling and composting, buying local, organic products, and keeping a garden. These practices are designed to reduce the impact of high-consuming Western lifestyles and have become closely connected to the notion of environmentally sustainable living. Our project responds to a recognised gap in knowledge about how immigrants from the Global South engage with the sustainability agenda when they come to live in relatively rich countries like the UK. This gap is important to fill for several reasons. For one, it is sometimes assumed that immigrants do not understand or are disinterested in sustainability. In addition, immigrants are often considered 'hard to reach' or 'difficult to engage' because of cultural and linguistic differences. Although difficult to prove, it is also possible that immigrants are blamed for lack of progress on environmental targets such as recycling rates. This blame may contribute to lack of community cohesion or worse.

We chose to work with Somali-origin residents because they are one of the largest Global South immigrant groups living in Manchester. Somalis are also the largest immigrant group in Moss Side, which is a ward close to the University of Manchester in which we have done prior research on local environmental quality. In addition to asking Somali-origin residents about their perceptions of environmental problems, we wanted to find out about their household practices of shopping, cooking, water and energy use, and waste disposal.

The study was initiated by researchers in the SCI who worked in partnership with bilingual members of the Somali community at every stage of the research process. Early on, Salah Abdisamad was recruited as an experienced community researcher with strong local networks. Safia Abdulrahman joined the team during the data collection phase and worked in a voluntary capacity. Their work involved translating research materials, recruiting participants, collecting data, and interpreting research findings. The team was also assisted by local organisations and businesses serving the Somali population, notably the Somali Adult Social Care Agency in Moss Side.

A total of 56 adults completed our questionnaire and 16 of the survey participants took part in follow-up interviews. A number of findings stand out from the analysis of survey responses and interviews; these are explored in further in this report. Before completing the report, people who participated in the research were invited to give feedback on a draft. This feedback helped to instil confidence that the findings and recommendations reflect the views of people involved in the research.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Main findings

- The Somali-origin residents who took part in the research (hereafter called 'participants') said they carry out a range of activities that are regarded as pro-environmental household practices (PEHP), in particular conserving water and energy, minimising food waste, and trying to buy products that have minimal packaging.
- Most participants were not familiar with the word 'sustainability', and this word does not have a direct translation in Somali. However, participants' reported values and practices are consistent with the concept of environmental sustainability.
- The main reasons why participants said they are concerned about the environment were: Islamic values, saving money, care for others, and awareness that natural resources are scarce for many people around the world.
- Participants told us that some of the environmentally friendly things they used to do back home in Somalia, such as sharing food with neighbours and growing food, are more difficult or impossible to continue in Moss Side.
- Most participants reported being unhappy with the environmental quality of their neighbourhood, in particular with the amount of rubbish on the street and the lack of green spaces. Participants also expressed frustrations with local waste collection services.
- Participants said they can see the sense in recycling, but some were unsure what items can be recycled or expressed confusion caused by a lack of adequate information.

Recommendations

In the report, we present recommendations grouped into three themes that lead directly from our findings. These are:

Challenging assumptions: This research found that many of the values and practices reported by Somali residents in Moss Side are consistent with the concept of environmental sustainability. It therefore serves to challenge assumptions that Somalis are disinterested in sustainability and that sustainability is a uniquely Western concept that is foreign to them. More research and engagement are needed so that the gaps in knowledge that fuel incorrect assumptions can be filled.

Enabling inclusivity: If the barriers created by lack of knowledge and incorrect assumptions are overcome, it will be easier to include a more diverse range of people in the sustainability agenda. The report contains some suggested measures for ensuring that Somali residents can actively participate.

Creating spaces and places for local engagement: The idea that Somali residents are 'hard to reach' or 'hard to engage' should be reconsidered. While it may be true that there are cultural and linguistic reasons for the apparent distance between Somali residents and non-Somali service providers, council staff, and neighbours, there is potential to overcome these reasons by reaching out. Suggestions for creating spaces and places for greater interaction are included in the report.

CONTENTS

Executive summary	2
Introduction.....	5
Research context	6
The research project	6
Collaborative approach.....	7
Research participants and data collection	7
Survey content	7
Community review of preliminary findings.....	9
Research findings	10
Understanding 'sustainability'	10
Continuities and changes in household practices.....	10
Motivations for living in sustainable ways	13
Barriers to living in sustainable ways	14
Discussion	17
Recommendations.....	18
Funding	20
Acknowledgements	20
Notes	20

INTRODUCTION

For many years governments and environmental campaigners around the world have been calling on people to live in more environmentally sustainable ways. In the face of climate emergency, this shift is more urgent than ever and requires active participation at all scales, not least at the levels of the city and the household. One of the primary objectives of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is to 'make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable'. Closer to home, Mayor Andy Burnham's ambition is for Greater Manchester to become 'a world-leading greener, cleaner, climate resilient city region' and to do so in an inclusive way that benefits everyone.

There is growing attention to the role that households play in meeting ambitions to reduce society's negative impact on the natural environment and climate system. The promotion of 'pro-environmental household behaviours' (PEHB) is now hard-wired into environmental policy and campaigning, and includes a range of well-known 'green' practices such as energy and water conservation, recycling and composting, buying local organic products, and keeping a garden. These practices are designed to reduce the impact of high-consuming Western lifestyles and have become closely connected to the notion of environmentally sustainable living. But ideas and messages about what it means to be sustainable have been oriented around the values and lifestyles of people in affluent countries like the UK. Most research about sustainability is about affluent lifestyles and how they should change if people are to become less wasteful and more 'pro-environmental'. There is almost no research in the UK that considers what can be learned from the everyday practices of individuals who have migrated to the UK from countries with lower resource consumption.

Conducted in 2018 by a team of university and community-based researchers, this study is an effort to move research in the direction of a more inclusive understanding of sustainability. Low-income people, ethnic minorities and immigrants from low income countries who live in rich countries are not usually included in research on sustainability. Worse than that, they are often blamed for environmental problems in rich countries. It is sometimes assumed that they do not understand how to live sustainably or they are considered 'hard to reach' because they may not 'integrate' or learn to speak the local language. Challenging assumptions is difficult when there are few opportunities to exchange ideas and experiences.

This report presents the main findings of our study, the aims of which were to learn how Somali-origin immigrants living in Moss Side engage with the concept of sustainability as well as to explore what motivates and inhibits the engagement of these residents with PEHB such as water and energy conservation and waste recycling.

One of the reasons we carried out this study is our belief that learning more about the PEHB of immigrants can help policy makers to meet sustainability goals while also improving community cohesion. Like many other cities in the UK, Manchester is currently juggling the challenges of a growing and increasingly diverse population with its pressing and ambitious environmental targets. Understanding how the values, experiences and relationships that shape the everyday practices of Somali immigrants fit with environmental sustainability agendas is an important step towards working through these challenges.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

The research was conducted in the Moss Side ward of Manchester, within the city region of Greater Manchester (GM). GM has a total population of 2.8million and between 2001 and 2011 it had the second highest population growth by overseas migration of all UK cities,¹ with 8.6% of the city-region population born outside the European Union.² The city of Manchester is home to a diverse population, with growing levels of immigration from the Global South, in particular the number of ethnic Africans settling in the city has increased steadily in recent years.³

The local government, Manchester City Council (MCC), is currently pursuing ambitious environmental improvement goals, such as to become the UK's first 'tidy city' by 2020. In March 2019, MCC fully endorsed the draft Zero Carbon Framework 2020-2038, which outlines how Manchester can achieve its aim to be carbon neutral by 2038. At the same time, it is important to note that MCC is operating under difficult financial conditions following significant cuts to their budget (around 38%) as part of Central Government austerity measures since 2010.

Moss Side is a ward with a long history of inward migration from Africa and the Caribbean, and at the 2011 national census had the second highest percentage of residents in GM born outside of the EU and other affluent countries. It has for a long time been one of the most economically deprived areas of England (e.g., in 2017/18, 47% of children in Moss Side were calculated to be living in poverty, after housing costs),⁴ and this deprivation generates a range of problems, including poor environmental quality (e.g., run-down housing and problems with fly-tipping) and the lowest recycling rate of all Manchester wards.⁵

We selected Moss Side as our study site because it is a ward close to the University of Manchester in which we have done prior research. We have been able to build on a study carried out by one of the authors in 2017, where residents were asked what they thought about the problem of rubbish in the streets.⁶ Because that study was only conducted in English, it excluded the views of many residents. This highlighted the need to carry out further research that was specifically designed to capture the views of a wider diversity of people living in Moss Side.

Somali-origin immigrants are the largest non-European immigrant group living in Moss Side according to the last national census. The Somali community in Manchester numbers around 30,000, most of whom are civil war refugees.⁷ In Moss Side and elsewhere, there is a perception that Somalis are 'hard to reach' due to linguistic and cultural barriers, and that they are likely to turn to mosques and Somali-run businesses to meet their needs rather than get involved in other community groups⁸. This reputation as being 'hard to reach'⁹ provides an additional rationale for selecting Somalis as our study sample.

No research that we know of has looked at the environmental concerns and understandings of Somalis living in the UK or how members of this community respond to sustainability and climate change mitigation agendas in their everyday lives.

RESEARCH PROJECT

The overall aim of our study was to explore how cultural understandings, values, practices and relations shape environmentally-significant household practices among Somali-origin immigrants in Moss Side. This aim translated into two main research questions driving this study:

- Have practices that impact on the environment, such as food provisioning, water use and waste recycling, changed or stayed the same in the process of moving from Somalia to the UK?
- What factors motivate or limit immigrants' engagement with environmental sustainability agendas relating to these practices?

Collaborative approach

The study was conducted by an interdisciplinary team of three academics from the University of Manchester, in collaboration with two researchers from the Somali community. Salah Abdisamad and Safia Abdulrahman provided input on the design of the survey and the interview protocol, facilitated contact with gatekeepers, helped in approaching participants, and assisted in translation during data collection. They also translated research documents into Somali and then back-translated into English for accuracy. Our data collection process involved working with local organisations and businesses serving the Somali population, notably the Somali Adult Social Care Agency, Somali Link, Al Furqan Mosque, Cohesion Legal Services, Powerhouse Library and Claremont Primary School.

Research participants and data collection

The study involved a survey completed by 56 Somali-origin adult residents of Moss Side and in-depth interviews with 16 of the people who responded to the survey. Participants filled out the survey in English or Somali in local public places, including a mosque, outside a school and Somali-run businesses. We asked all participants to fill in some basic, non-identifying details about themselves, enabling us to present a basic picture of our sample (Table 1).

Table 1: Characteristics of the research sample










































		% of sample
Gender	Female	47
	Male	53
Education	Primary	34
	Secondary and above	56
Employment status	Working full time	40
	Working part time	16
	Unemployed or not employed	42
Household income	Less than £10,000	31.6
	£10,000-£15,000	19.3
	£15,000-£20,000	14.0
	£20,000-£25,000	15.8
	£25,000-£30,000	5.3
	£30,000-£35,000	3.5
	Prefer not to say	10.5
Length of time in the UK	Up to 5 years	8.8
	5-10 years	33.3
	11-20 years	33.5
	21-29 years	22.6
	Over 29 years	1.8

RESEARCH PROJECT

Survey content

The survey included questions in two main sections. First, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which a number of local environmental problems were of concern to them, from 'a big concern' to 'not a concern'.

Image 1: Survey question on environmental concerns

	A big concern  Not a concern				
The amount of litter in my area					
Large objects that have been dumped, such as cars, fridges or sofas					
The smell from rubbish left lying around					
The number of messy or overgrown gardens or waste land					
Dirty air that is not nice to breathe					
Pests such as mice, birds, rats or flies					
Dog mess left in the road					
The lack of green spaces in my area					

Second, participants were asked how frequently they carry out a series of PEHB (listed in Table 2 on page 11), selecting from the options 'always', 'often', 'rarely' and never'. Based on their response, participants were then asked to give the main reason why they do or do not carry out these practices.

After completing the survey phase, we interviewed nine men and seven women who felt comfortable speaking to us in English. A Somali-speaking researcher was present for most interviews to provide translation where necessary. Interviewees' ages ranged from 27 to 62, and years spent living in the UK ranged from 5 to 32. All but one interviewee was born in Somalia.

We conducted interviews in order to learn more detail about the participants' responses to the survey questions. In the interviews, which lasted up to one hour, we asked about people's PEHB in past and present and their motivations for doing things in particular ways. We also asked what the concept of sustainability means to them and for their views on the quality of the environment and local services in Moss Side.

The data collected from 56 surveys were analysed using a statistical software package called SPSS and the interviews were professionally transcribed. We analysed the transcripts by identifying a set of frequently occurring themes and patterns in what people said. After developing a set of key findings we shared them with the Somali co-researchers who gave feedback and suggestions.

RESEARCH PROJECT

Community review of preliminary findings

Preliminary findings of the research were shared with participants before this report was finalised. In April 2019, we held a community meeting in Claremont Primary School (CPS) where we presented and discussed the research with community members, a local councillor, a representative of Al Furqan mosque, and members of community groups that assisted us with the research. To facilitate discussion, we were assisted by a Somali speaking member of CPS staff who translated our presentation. Participants were invited to give comments verbally or to write them on post-it notes. One of our specific questions for those in attendance was 'what are the main messages we should include in our report?'

Image 2: Presenting preliminary research findings



RESEARCH FINDINGS

Somali-origin residents make up a sizeable percentage of the UK population, numbering 101,130 individuals at the 2011 Census. This population is clustered in a number of UK cities, among which Manchester has one of the largest populations. This is the first piece of research that we know of that takes questions about environmental sustainability to the Somali community, in Manchester or elsewhere in the UK.

Understanding 'sustainability'

It is probably true that many people in the UK, regardless of their background, may not be able to explain what 'sustainability' means. In fact, it is often observed that the concept does not resonate beyond that proportion of the population who are 'switched on' by environmental issues in general. Nevertheless, we thought it would be important to find out what level of understanding there is among our participants.

There is no straightforward equivalent to the English word 'sustainability' in the languages spoken by the participants in our study¹⁰. Salah and Safia, the two Somali-speaking researchers felt that the title we used to communicate about the project during data collection, 'Environmental Sustainability in Manchester', could be most appropriately translated as *Joogtaynta Bay'ada ee Manchester*, literally meaning 'continuity' (*joogtaynta*) of 'the environment' (*bay'ada*) in Manchester.

We asked all interviewees to explain what, if anything, they understood by 'environmental sustainability'. If asked for clarification, the interviewer gave a definition of sustainability as 'people acting now in ways that mean that future generations can have access to the resources they need to live well in the future and continue to enjoy life on our planet'. This meaning seemed to resonate with most participants, who then expanded on it in their terms, referring to health, balance, and responsibility. One person translated the interviewer's explanation of sustainability into what was for him a more familiar phrase, stemming from his Islamic belief: *'Use what you need; don't use what you don't need'*. Other participants also emphasised the idea of sustainability to mean using only what was necessary in order to have enough in the future. As one woman explained, *'I always tell my children if you waste it today, tomorrow you might not get...you have to think about that'*.

Although most participants did not think about their daily practices in terms of sustainability, once the word was explained, they did agree that something very like it plays an important part of their everyday decision-making. The meaning was there, without the vocabulary.

Continuities and changes in household practices

We were interested to find out about how the experience of moving from Somalia to settle in the UK has shaped participants' engagement with practices considered 'green' and 'sustainable' by UK-standards, and how participants compare their ways of living in both places.

Data collected from surveys and interviews tell an interesting story of both continuity and change in participants' pro-environmental household behaviours, in three areas in particular: i) conserving water and energy; ii) reducing waste, and iii) enjoying the natural environment.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Table 2: Participants' pro-environmental household behaviours in the past and present

How often do you...	1 Never %	2 Rarely	3 Often	4 Always %	I did this in country of origin %
Try not to waste water	5.4	3.6	37.5	51.8	96.3
Try not to use too much electricity	5.4	19.6	42.9	32.1	78.2
Buy organic foods or products labelled 'eco-friendly'	16.1	48.2	25.0	10.7	76.4
Grow your own food at home or a community allotment	79.6	11.1	9.3	0	57.4
Try to avoid using plastic shopping bags	17.9	21.4	39.3	21.4	50.0
Recycle food waste using green bin	7.3	12.7	36.4	43.6	46.2
Recycle household waste	7.1	16.1	32.1	44.6	39.6
Eat a diet that is low in animal products	22.2	31.5	37.0	9.3	37.0

i) Conserving water and energy

Most participants told us that trying to conserve water and energy was as important to them in Manchester as it was in Somalia:

- 89.3% always or often try not to waste water in Manchester, and 75% try to not to waste energy
- 96.3% always or often tried not to waste water back in Somalia and 78.2% tried not to waste energy

Participants said that water and electricity were more easily available in Manchester than in Somalia. Some remembered seasonal droughts and power cuts in Somalia or Kenya. Some said that the ready availability of water and electricity in the UK meant their children did not value these resources in the same way as they did. Almost all spoke of trying to teach responsible resource use to their children. For example:

'These young people, they don't see the world the way we see it, and we have to teach them. We have to show how important it is to protect the earth and water and power. Somalians are responsible for everything, but here [people] are quite careless. Because environment helps them, they do not worry.'

ii) Reducing waste

Participants reported a high rate of recycling. 76.7% said they recycle household waste and 80% said they recycle food waste. However, in interviews, participants pointed out ways that the recycling system in their area could be better. They said recycling bins provided by the Council, in common alleyways, are often dirty and overflowing. They also noted that rules about recycling seem to change without notice. Several said it was unfair that residents have to pay to replace bins if they disappear.

46.2% recalled recycling food waste and 39.6% recalled recycling household waste in Somalia. This change may not mean that more waste was thrown away without being recycled in Somali.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Instead, it may simply mean that less waste was produced in the first place. For example:

- In interviews, participants recalled only buying what was necessary for that day in Somalia (and often also in Manchester). As one participant said: *'Everything is fresh. [People] go to the market and buy what they want for today, tomorrow is another day, and the day after is another.'*
- They also recalled sharing food between extended families and with needy community members in Somalia: *'you don't live alone, you live with a group of 10 people [...] sharing foods, stories, sharing activities'*. This practice, which most interviewees said they had not continued in Manchester, is another way that less waste is produced.
- Another difference was that most of the food consumed in Somalia was produced locally with little or no packaging. Participants expressed frustration about plastic packaging in Manchester that cannot be recycled, for example, *'One of the main reasons why I stopped shopping at [major supermarket] was [because] their packaging is absolutely ridiculous.'*

iii) Enjoying the natural environment

Participants talked of major changes in how participants feel about and care for the natural environment in Manchester compared to in Somalia. Here we are referring to the quality of the local physical/natural environment, which includes access to clean air and outdoor spaces as well as the condition of streets and alleys. The ability to enjoy green space for leisure or growing food is also relevant.

- 64.3% of participants said the environment in Moss Side was 'very bad' or 'bad'.
- Over 85% said that they are concerned about pests, litter, dumped objects and the smell from rubbish.
- Between 50% and 75% said that they are concerned about overgrown gardens or waste land, dirty air, dog mess and lack of green spaces.

Table 3: Participants' concerns about the local environment

To what extent are the following a concern to you?	1 Not a concern %	2 Somewhat a concern	3 Neutral	4 A concern %	A big concern %	Mean score (5-1)
Pests	0	3.6	7.3	12.7	76.4	4.62
Amount of litter	1.8	5.3	7.0	10.5	75.4	4.53
Large dumped objects	5.3	3.5	14.0	15.8	61.4	4.25
Smell from rubbish	3.6	12.5	3.6	17.9	62.5	4.23
Overgrown gardens/waste land	3.6	8.9	16.1	25.0	46.4	4.02
Dirty air	3.6	8.9	19.6	19.6	48.2	4.00
Dog mess	5.5	14.5	18.2	25.5	36.4	3.73
Lack of green spaces	3.5	14.0	26.3	19.3	36.8	3.72

Participants told us about some of the reasons why they do not enjoy time outdoors as much as they had in Somalia. For example, *'there is no environment here'*, meaning there are no places for children to play outdoors. Others commented on the amount of rubbish in the area, saying *'you feel tired because of the environment'* and *'Moss Side is flooded with rubbish'*.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Another change was that 57.4% of participants recalled growing food back home, but 79.1% said they 'never' grew food in Manchester and 11.1% said they 'rarely' grew food. Participants said they did not grow food mainly because of a lack of space, an unsuitable climate and not knowing how to grow their usual plants in Manchester.

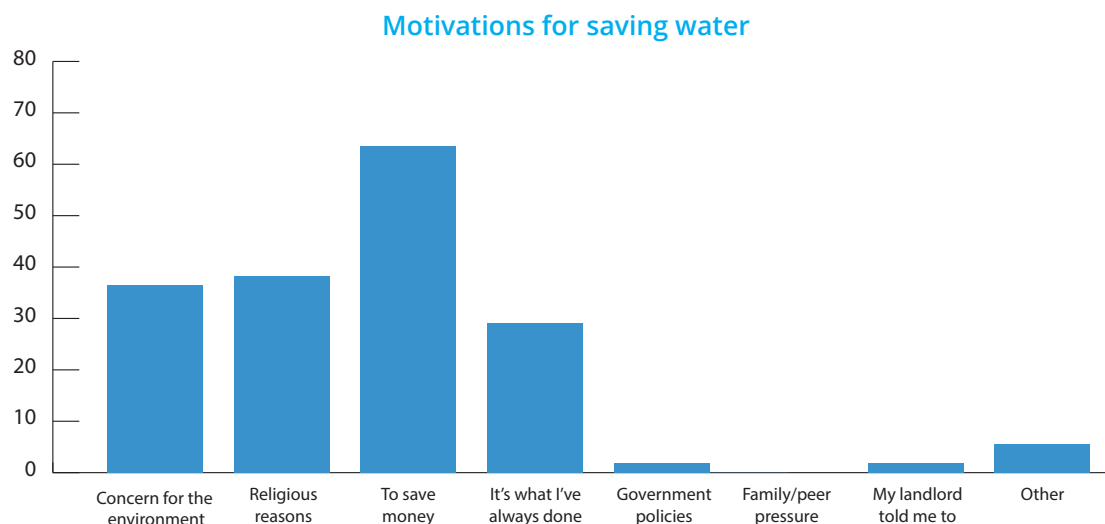
Motivations for living in sustainable ways

We found out about participants' motivations for engaging (or not) in PEHB in two ways: firstly by asking participants to select one or more reasons why they always, often, rarely or never engage in a particular behaviour, then seeking further information about this among the participants who agreed to be interviewed.

The image below shows an example of a question from in the survey (in this case, about saving water, which, as noted above was the most commonly performed behaviour in both the present and the past). This is followed by a graph collating responses to this question, and showing the reasons participants gave for saving water.¹¹

Image 3: How often do you try not to waste water? (Survey question and collated responses)

1. How often do you try not to waste water (e.g. taking short showers, collecting rain water for plant watering?) Please circle 'never' 'rarely' 'often' 'always'			
Never	Rarely	Often	Always
Why not? (Select up to two reasons) <input type="checkbox"/> It is inconvenient where I live <input type="checkbox"/> I am not used to doing this <input type="checkbox"/> Because the government is not doing enough about this <input type="checkbox"/> Because I don't think it will make a difference <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know how <input type="checkbox"/> I don't care about this <input type="checkbox"/> Other - please specify here:		OR Why? (Select up to two main reasons) <input type="checkbox"/> Out of concern for the environment/nature <input type="checkbox"/> For religious reasons <input type="checkbox"/> To save money <input type="checkbox"/> It's what I have always done <input type="checkbox"/> Because of government policies or campaigns <input type="checkbox"/> Because of family or peer pressure <input type="checkbox"/> Because my landlord told me to <input type="checkbox"/> Other - please specify here:	



RESEARCH FINDINGS

We found that participants have a range of motivations for living in sustainable ways. By far the most common reasons they gave were: concern for health, care for others in the present and the future, their religious beliefs and simply carrying on doing 'what they have always done'. These quotes from interviews help to illustrate these reasons:

'What happens in Africa could affect Europe and what happens in Europe could affect other parts of the world. So it is all this, we are in this universe and the whole universe needs to work together.'

'At the end of the day is like we have to do these things for our youngsters. Look after the environment for them, I think because they're the new generation.'

'It worries me sometimes, I'm wondering where the world is going to, the planet, it seems that it's full of rubbish, full of plastic, full of these things not suitable for the human being.'

'[In Somalia] if you have some food left over, you can give, there is the people that they don't have food that comes to your house every day, you can give them. Those people, you know, even can be neighbour, some neighbour, they don't have work or they don't have money enough, so you can help them.'

'Relating to Islam, use what you need'

'Even in my own religion when we're doing ablution – like, we pray and you've got to wash yourself – it says, "Don't use a lot of water". There's some people that don't have water and you've got to think that way as well. I have a big compassion about water. Other people don't even have water.'

Barriers to living in sustainable ways

We were also interested to know why participants did not or only rarely engaged in certain PEHBs. Survey responses, along with more detailed discussion in interviews, suggest that the main reason people do not do these things is not because they do not think they are important, but because the conditions in which they live make these inconvenient or even impossible.

This was especially true of recycling. As noted above, there was a notable increase between participants' reported recycling practices in Somalia, where there had been much lower levels of waste, and the UK. The higher production of waste in the UK meant that participants could see the sense in recycling, as one participant observed: *'if you see there is a good reason then you adopt the system'*. However, almost all interviewees identified problems with the system, notably overflowing waste and contaminated and uncollected bins. This was particularly true for participants who live in areas with communal recycling bins (located in the alleys in the old terraced parts of the ward). As one participant said:

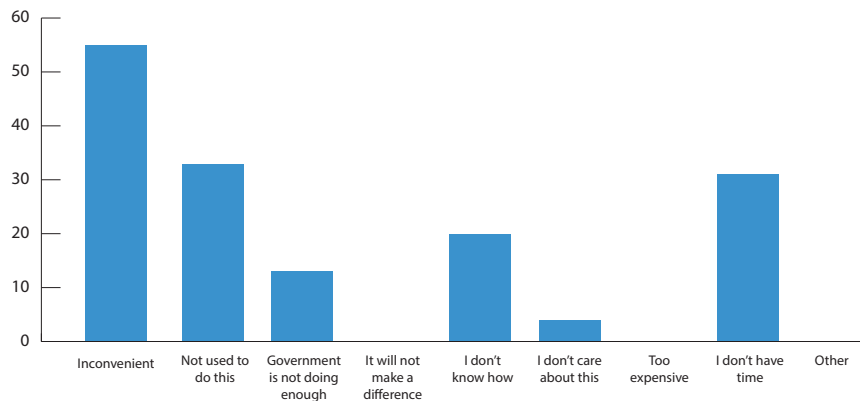
'The bins are such a mess that nobody wants to be there for long. We try to keep places nice and clean, but if the Council's not giving us the equipment, we can't do it.'

In addition, some participants said in interviews that they wanted to reduce food waste, buy organic food or grow food as they were used to doing before moving to Manchester. However, growing food is not possible where most participants live and their local shopping options

RESEARCH FINDINGS

are limited to supermarkets that are not known for their organic and plastic free product ranges. Survey data show a clear consensus that this is inconvenient and time-consuming, and not something that participants are used to doing in Manchester, despite this having been common practice in Somalia.

Table 4: Participants' reasons for not growing own food¹²



Survey responses indicated a number of activities where participants said that they did not know how to or were not used to doing something, yet discussion in interviews revealed that it was not a lack of capacity or inclination but rather that they had not been given sufficient support or information. For example, in relation to recycling, one participant said:

'Having them communal bins, it's like putting everything together, environmentally-wise it's not a nice thing to do. Because no one is looking, and the notice hasn't got names or anything, so everyone will just come and chuck it in.'

Image 4: A messy alleyway with overflowing bins in Moss Side



RESEARCH FINDINGS

Participants also talked about not being informed when rules were changed for recycling and waste collection, making it even harder to follow the system. While such frustrations resonate with previous research carried in Moss Side¹³, following the system is even harder for newcomers to the community, who often arrive with minimal English and without an established support network. As one participant said, referring to new arrivals:

'They need orientation. Nothing is hard, but everything is hard if you don't know how to manage, how to be with it. But if you or someone else, who understands [a] different society, then you can do orientation. You can make publicity to teach – if you do this, this will happen'.

Another participant talked of the need for different communities to learn from one another, saying:

'it's good if the communities can work together [...]people, they can gather there in the community centres, you know, [...] they can come there in the community centre and do the event there. Because people, if you tell them about this is gonna affect your health, your children, they will come, you know, share experience about this and that...'

In the recommendations section, we offer some concrete suggestions for addressing this perceived need for greater guidance and support.

Image 5: An alleyway that has been cleaned and cultivated by local residents



DISCUSSION

The data we have collected allow us to make a number of claims. These claims are significant for shedding light on the limitations of understandings of sustainability informed only by Western perspectives and the need to learn from Somali residents and other Global South immigrants living in UK cities. They also point to a number of recommendations that people with limited knowledge of Somali and other non-Western cultures, especially those who are in governance/service positions and community-facing organisations, should consider.

Although participants did not use the term 'sustainability', it is clear that its underlying principles are present in their everyday choices. The commonly given answer, 'it's what I've always done', is evidence of continuity in a number of environmentally significant practices, including conserving water and minimising food waste. Concern for the environment predates their arrival to the UK and continues to motivate their household practices.

Besides saving money, religion and relationships are the most important reasons why participants live in ways that can be considered sustainable. Religious teachings of Islam place great emphasis on environmental care, and appear to explain participants' strongly expressed ethic of care for others, whether family members and neighbours or less fortunate strangers. The belief in using resources carefully, which many participants traced to Islam, also motivates participants' desire not to waste water, energy, and food.

Both male and female participants in our research agreed that women play an important role in household resource management and they talked of passing on responsibility for household stewardship to their daughters. This means that it is particularly important to engage with Somali women and girls in public conversations about environmental sustainability.

How participants think about and assign responsibility for local environmental quality is shaped by their relationship with the City Council. Many said that in Somalia there is less expectation on government to provide household waste disposal services. Here in Manchester, participants are prepared to and want to look after their local environment, but they expect the Council to meet them half way. When it appears that the Council is not doing that, such as when bins are not emptied, they feel frustrated - like many other citizens. Their frustration stems from paying taxes for services that are not being adequately delivered. This points to the need for better communication, as it is well known that the quality of the urban environment depends on there being a 'mutually supportive relationship between residents and [local] services'.¹⁴

The reasons participants gave for not engaging in PEHB have more to do with social and structural conditions than with individual choices or failings, such as lack of knowledge or concern. Simply put, place matters. The specific context of Moss Side as a stigmatised area plays a role in shaping how participants regard the environment.¹⁵ For example, some participants pointed out that neighbouring wards are cleaner and have better access to shops, parks and other services than Moss Side. Even within Moss Side participants noted a difference between households that had their own bins (viewed as a more favourable option) and households that used communal bins. These differences in service provision shape the extent to which residents are able to engage in PEHB. This observation is consistent with existing research that finds a correlation between social inequality and poor environmental quality.¹⁶

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations were developed in response to the report findings and feedback gained at the community meeting. They are offered with recognition that they require commitment and resources from a range of local stakeholders. Some will be easier to implement than others.

Challenging assumptions

Our research found that many of the values and practices reported by Somali residents in Moss Side are consistent with the concept of environmental sustainability. It therefore serves to challenge assumptions about sustainability being a uniquely Western concept that is 'foreign' to people from the Global South. Such assumptions are based on a lack of knowledge that should be remedied. Therefore we recommend:

- Do not assume Somali residents are disengaged with or need to be educated about environmental issues.
- More research should be carried out with people from non-Western backgrounds and religions in order to expand the concept of sustainability beyond Western framings.
- Research should pay attention to the social and structural barriers that can prevent the continuity of immigrants' environmentally-friendly practices in their new place of residence.

Enabling inclusivity

If the barriers created by lack of knowledge and incorrect assumptions are overcome, it will be easier to include a more diverse range of people in the sustainability agenda. In order to increase the likelihood that Somali residents can actively participate, we recommend:

- Make sure that language used in environmental campaigns is accessible and avoids culturally-specific terms (like 'sustainability').
- Ensure that new residents have access to basic information about how to participate in local environmental programs (such as recycling and waste collection) in their own language.
- Appoint environmental ambassadors from the Somali community to represent community concerns at public meetings about environmental issues.
- Where possible and appropriate, respect cultural values by holding women-only or men-only meetings.
- Recognise the role of religious beliefs and family roles (especially the role of women and girls) in shaping everyday practices in Somali households.

Creating spaces and places for local engagement

The idea that certain groups, such as Somali immigrants, are 'hard to reach' or 'hard to engage' should be reconsidered. While it may be true that there are cultural and linguistic reasons for the apparent distance between Somali residents and non-Somali service providers, council staff and neighbours, there is potential to overcome these barriers by reaching out, by creating spaces and places for greater interaction. To do this, we recommend:

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Hold regular public events for new residents to learn about and express concerns about the environmental quality of the local area. Make sure they are gender and language inclusive and culturally appropriate. Hold some meetings just for women and involve interpreters who speak the languages spoken by the people who attend.
- Organise skills-sharing sessions on practical experiences in sustainability issues.
- Encourage mosques, churches and other faith groups to play a role in bringing people together to put ideas about sustainability into practice.
- Invest in green spaces: create community gardens and green alleyways that can encourage hands-on collaboration and shared projects among neighbours from different backgrounds.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

People who have moved from a country such as Somalia that is experiencing difficult socio-economic, political and ecological conditions (due to a colonialism, war and climate change) to a relatively more affluent part of the world are in a unique position. On the one hand they have lived experience of resource scarcity and know what adaption for survival involves. On the other hand, their lifestyles have contributed very little to the drivers of environmental and climate change. And yet policies that call for changes to consumption behaviour in rich countries like the UK do not differentiate between these uniquely-positioned residents and the general UK-born population. This means that policy messages can often lack resonance, and valuable knowledge and experience of immigrants may be ignored. Our study responds to this situation and aims to contribute to the development of a more inclusive approach to sustainability than currently exists in Manchester and other cities that are pursuing an ambitious green agenda.

Although this research has yielded interesting findings and insights from residents of Moss Side, it is impossible to make generalisations about the concerns and practices of Somali immigrants. We were able to speak to a relatively small number of residents over a few short weeks in the late summer of 2018. The sample was not intended to be, and is not, representative of the Somali population in Moss Side (or the UK). There are no doubt differences in the perceptions, practices and concerns of Somali immigrants that we were not able to learn about, so tracking these differences over time would be a valuable aim for future research.

A significant outcome of this research is that relationships were established through collaboration, which we hope will be a foundation for future work. The three Anglo-European researchers (two of whom are immigrants to the UK themselves) could not have embarked on this project without working closely with our two Somali-origin colleagues Salah and Safia. As a final recommendation, we suggest that more research should be done in this collaborative and community-centred way.

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⁸Change Institute, 2009. *The Somali Muslim Community in England*. Department for Communities and Local Government: London.

⁹This view was also expressed in a key informant interview with a Somali-origin researcher and in an off the record communication with a policy maker and councillor, August 2018.

¹⁰Within the Somali population there are speakers of Barawa, as well as Somali, which is the dominant language. Not all participants were able to read Somali text, particularly women. In these cases, Salah or Safia read out the survey questions and wrote responses on participants' behalf.

¹¹Graph displays the percentage of participants who responded that they 'always' or 'often' save water for each of the reasons listed in the survey. Percentages do not amount to 100 as participants could select more than one option.

¹²Graph displays the percentage of participants who responded that they 'rarely' or 'never' grow food for reasons listed in the survey. Percentages do not amount to 100 as participants could select more than one option.

¹³See MacGregor & Pardoe, 2018.

¹⁴Bramley, G., Bailey, N., Hastings, A., Watkins, D. Crowdace, R., 2012. Environmental justice in the city? Challenges for policy and resource allocation in keeping the streets clean. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 44(3), 741-761.

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¹⁶For example, see Bramley, G., Bailey, N., Hastings, A., Watkins, D. Crowdace, R., 2012. Environmental justice in the city? Challenges for policy and resource allocation in keeping the streets clean. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 44(3), 741-761; Bullard, R. D. (2000). *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality*. Westview Press, Boulder, CO; Hastings, A., 2009. Poor neighbourhoods and poor services: evidence on the 'rationing' of environmental service provision to deprived neighbourhoods. *Urban Studies* 46(13), 2907-292; Holifield, R., Porter, M., Walker, G. (Eds.), 2010. *Spaces of Environmental Justice*. Wiley-Blackwell: Oxford.