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# 1.1 Perspectives

IB ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS AND SOCIETIES



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# Chapter Content

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How do different perspectives develop?
- How do perspectives affect the decisions we make concerning environmental issues?

## CONTENT STATEMENTS

Content	Studied	Revised
1.1.1 A perspective is how a particular situation is viewed and understood by an individual. It is based on a mix of personal and collective assumptions, values and beliefs.		
1.1.2. Perspectives are informed and justified by sociocultural norms, scientific understandings, laws, religion, economic conditions, local and global events, and lived experience, among other factors.		
1.1.3 Values are qualities or principles that people feel have worth and importance in life.		
1.1.4 The values that underpin our perspectives can be seen in our communication and actions with the wider community. The values held by organizations can be seen through advertisements, media, policies and actions.		
1.1.5 Values surveys can be used to investigate the perspectives shown by a particular social group towards environmental issues.		
1.1.6 Worldviews are the lenses shared by groups of people through which they perceive, make sense of and act within their environment. They shape people's values and perspectives through culture, philosophy, ideology, religion and politics.		
1.1.7 An environmental value system is a model that shows the inputs affecting our perspectives and the outputs resulting from our perspectives.		
1.1.8 Environmental perspectives (worldviews) can be classified into the broad categories of technocentric, anthropocentric and ecocentric.		
1.1.9 Perspectives and the beliefs that underpin them change over time in all societies. They can be influenced by government or non-governmental organization (NGO) campaigns or through social and demographic change.		
1.1.10 The development of the environmental movement has been influenced by individuals, literature, the media, major environmental disasters, international agreements, new technologies and scientific discoveries.		

## THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

- *"Our opinion of ourselves is potentially biased as are all opinions. Consequently, we only know what we value by reflecting on our actions."* To what extent do you agree with this statement?

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# 1: Exploring Values, Perspectives and Worldviews

Read the following summaries of British and South African values. Be mindful that societies are very complex and so are their values. Not only that, values vary amongst individuals. The following are simplifications and may not fully represent the value system of any one person.

## BRITISH VALUES

**Individual Liberties:** Britons highly value personal freedoms, including freedom of speech, expression, and religion. There's a strong emphasis on individual rights and autonomy.

**Rule of Law:** British society prioritises the rule of law, equality before the law, and justice. There's a belief in the fairness of legal processes and institutions.

**Tolerance and Diversity:** Multiculturalism is a fundamental aspect of British society, with an emphasis on tolerance and acceptance of diverse backgrounds, cultures, and lifestyles.

**Politeness and Etiquette:** Britons pride themselves on politeness, manners, and adherence to social etiquette, valuing courtesy and respect for others.

**Sense of Community:** Despite individualism, there's a strong sense of community, with people coming together to support each other, particularly in times of need.

**Humour and Wit:** British culture values humour, wit, and often employs sarcasm, irony, and self-deprecation in communication and social interactions.

**Education and Intellectualism:** Education is highly esteemed, with an emphasis on critical thinking, intellectual pursuits, and lifelong learning.

**Fair Play and Sportsmanship:** Fairness, integrity, and adherence to rules, particularly in sports, are important values in British culture.

**Tradition and Heritage:** Britain celebrates its rich history and traditions, preserving cultural heritage through events, ceremonies, and customs.

**Freedom and Democracy:** Britain's democratic traditions, including the Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights, and the evolution of parliamentary democracy, underscore the importance placed on individual liberties, rule of law, and representative government. Freedom of speech, expression, and the right to participate in democratic processes are core tenets that shape British society and its institutions.

**Resilience and Stoicism:** There's a sense of resilience and stoicism in facing challenges or adversity, reflecting a characteristic British attitude.

## SOUTH AFRICAN VALUES

**Ubuntu:** A core African philosophy emphasising humanity, community, and interconnectedness. Ubuntu promotes compassion, empathy, and the idea that "I am because we are."

**Diversity and Multiculturalism:** South Africa is known for its diverse population comprising various ethnicities, languages, and cultures. There's a strong emphasis on embracing and celebrating this diversity as a source of strength.

**Reconciliation and Forgiveness:** Post-apartheid South Africa has placed significant emphasis on reconciliation and forgiveness as essential values for healing historical wounds and building a unified nation.

**Resilience and Adaptability:** South Africans have shown remarkable resilience in overcoming challenges, including apartheid and its legacy, economic hardships, and social inequalities. Adaptability and resourcefulness are valued traits.

**Hospitality and Community:** Hospitality plays a significant role in South African culture, with a tradition of welcoming guests and fostering a sense of belonging within communities.

**Spirituality and Indigenous Beliefs:** Traditional African spirituality and indigenous beliefs are deeply ingrained in South African culture, contributing to a holistic worldview that respects nature and ancestral connections.

**Social Justice and Equality:** Despite persistent socio-economic disparities, there's a strong commitment to social justice

and equality in South Africa, with ongoing efforts to address historical injustices and promote inclusive development.

**Respect for Elders and Traditions:** Respect for elders, ancestors, and traditional customs is an integral part of South African society, with values passed down through generations.

**Freedom and Democracy:** South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994 marked a significant milestone, symbolising the values of freedom, democracy, and human rights that are foundational to the nation.

**Pride in Heritage:** South Africans take pride in their cultural heritage, including music, dance, art, and cuisine, which serve as expressions of identity and belonging.

# TASK 1

Answer questions 1-4 based on the information provided about British and South African values, as well as your own knowledge.

1. List 3 similarities and 3 differences between British and South African values. (AO1)

Similarities	Differences

2. Describe how the emphasis on autonomy and individual rights in the UK might influence a British person's perspective on the issue of raising taxes for cars that are less fuel efficient. (AO2)

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3. Describe the ways South African Ubuntu values might influence their perspective on a *named* environmental issue. (AO2)

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4. Suggest how spiritual beliefs centred around ancestral connections may shape a person's perspective on protecting biodiversity. (AO3)

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## TASK 2

One way to determine your value system is to simply ask themselves what is important to you. While this is valid, one draw back is that a person's opinion of themselves is potentially biased (just like all opinions). People are very complex and we may not know ourselves as well as we think. Another helpful strategy is to reflect on our behaviour; it is our actions that reflect what is important to us.

1. Look at the details in the table. For each summary, state at least one thing this person values, then **suggest** a possible environmental perspective they may have. (AO2)

Details	Value(s)	Possible environmental perspective
<b>Noor</b> states, "Since having children, most of my decisions are focused around them. I changed jobs so that I'd have more time free on weekends to spend with my kids."	<i>Family</i>	<i>Protect natural systems so that ecosystem services are available for future generations.</i>
<b>Julia</b> is a Christian; she often looks for guidance in the Bible. When she saw a homeless person begging in the street she remembered that the Bible encourages people to love their neighbours as they love themselves. Based on this, she bought some food for the homeless person and gave them some money.		
<b>Tim</b> works 5 minutes walk away from his home but he usually drives anyway. He orders healthy takeaway meals most evenings from a health food restaurant and has them delivered. The restaurant is a long way across town and uses lots of imported ingredients. Tim states, "I really care about the environment. I love taking walks in the forest; imagine a world without trees and chirping birds!"		
<b>Harry</b> is discussing climate change with a colleague. Harry says, "No-one can predict the future, so no-one knows what damage climate change might bring. But slowing our economic growth to move away from fossil fuels will definitely cause harm, including poverty. If the solution is worse than the problem, it's no solution at all."		

### TASK 3

A worldview is the lens through which groups of people perceive, make sense of and act within their environment.

1. Each heading below represents a group or community who may have a shared worldview. Under each heading, summarise the possible values and perspectives they may have in relation to a named environmental issue. The first one has been completed as an example. (AO3)

#### **Politically conservative people in a Western democracy**

*Conservatives often value freedom of choice and expression, and may believe that laws or regulations should not impede on civil liberties. This provides the perspective that legal restrictions on cars based on their level of emissions would likely be rejected as potential climate change solutions and instead individuals would be encouraged to make their own decisions as to how or whether to reduce emissions.*

#### **Buddhists**

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#### **Citizens of a very small tropical island.**

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2. Read the statement below:

*“Residents of a city who practice the same religion will all have the same worldview.”*

Evaluate this statement using examples of perspectives and/or values to support your answer. (AO3)

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## 2. Environmental Perspectives

Read the information below about an organisation called Just Stop Oil. As you read about their philosophy and methods, consider to what extent you agree or disagree what they do.

### Overview

"Just Stop Oil" is an environmental activist group from the UK advocating for a rapid transition away from fossil fuel dependency, particularly targeting the oil industry. The initiative seeks to address the pressing issue of climate change by urging individuals, governments, and corporations to cease the extraction, production, and consumption of oil.

Central to the Just Stop Oil campaign is the recognition of the interconnectedness between oil consumption, environmental degradation, and social justice issues. The movement emphasises the disproportionate impacts of oil extraction on marginalised communities, including indigenous peoples and low-income neighbourhoods, who often bear the brunt of environmental pollution and health hazards. By raising awareness of these alleged injustices and promoting what they consider inclusive solutions, Just Stop Oil strives to build a coalition of diverse stakeholders committed to environmental sustainability and social equity.

### Methods

Just Stop Oil mobilises individuals and communities to participate in protests, demonstrations, and grassroots campaigns aimed at raising awareness about the negative impacts of oil extraction and consumption. They use civil resistance, vandalism and traffic obstruction as their methods of protest and raising awareness. Their actions are often illegal.

Their traffic protests typically involve blocking or disrupting traffic in strategic locations such as major roads, highways, or intersections; protesters sit down on busy roads or walk very slowly in front of cars. By obstructing transportation routes, the

movement aims to draw attention to the urgency of transitioning away from fossil fuels.



Just Stop Oil activists walking up Whitehall towards Trafalgar Square on Saturday 20 May 2023. (Hickson via Wikimedia)

Just Stop Oil activists have gained media attention on several occasions at art galleries. One example of this is an incident in October 2022 in which two activities through soup on the *Sunflowers* painting by Vincent Van Gogh and then glued their hands to the wall.

Just Stop Oil encourages individuals and institutions to divest from fossil fuel industries and support what they consider more sustainable alternatives. This includes boycotting companies associated with oil extraction and investing in renewable energy projects and "ethical" investment funds.

### Criticisms

One major criticism is the potential for economic disruption caused by abruptly stopping oil production and consumption. Critics argue that oil is a vital component of the global economy, providing energy for various industries and supporting millions of jobs worldwide. They contend that a sudden halt to oil usage without viable alternatives in place could lead to economic instability, job losses, and decreased productivity.

It has been argued that current renewable energy technologies may not be sufficient to meet global energy demands, and a rapid transition could lead to energy shortages and price spikes, particularly in regions heavily reliant on oil.

Many countries rely on oil imports to meet their energy needs, and disruptions in the oil supply chain could lead to geopolitical instability and conflicts over resource access.

Critics also point out that developing nations, which may not have the resources or infrastructure to transition to alternative energy sources, could be disproportionately affected by efforts to stop oil usage. These countries often rely heavily on oil exports for revenue and economic development. Critics argue that advocating for an immediate end to oil usage without considering the impact on these nations could exacerbate poverty and inequality.

## **TASK 4**

1. Outline the the following environmental perspectives. (AO2)

### **Ecocentric**

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### **Antropocentric**

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### **Technocentric**

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2. Describe the environmental perspective of Just Stop Oil using examples of their beliefs and methods from the text. (AO2)

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3. Evaluate the methods of Just Stop Oil in tackling the issue of climate change. (AO3)

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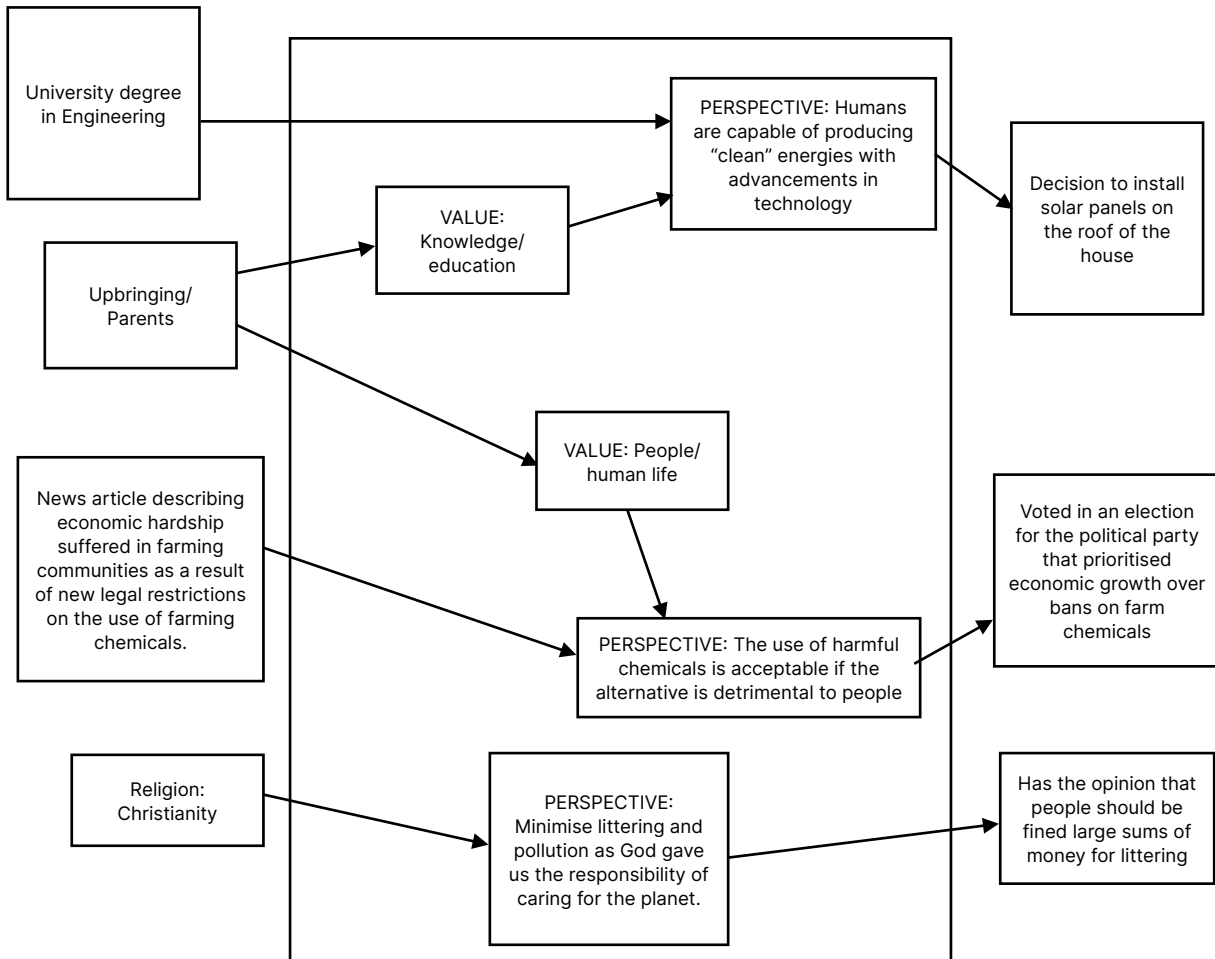
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# 3: Environmental Value Systems

## TASK 5

The system diagram below represents a person's environmental value system and how it shapes their actions (outputs).



Construct a system diagram to represent your own environmental value system. Use a blank sheet of paper or complete it digitally. (A03)

*You may want to include the values and perspectives you presented in task 3.*



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# 4. The Environmental Movement

The environmental movement has involved a range of key events, disasters, international agreements and media releases. Below is a brief timeline highlighting some key dates in the movement.

- 1872: The establishment of the world's first national park, Yellowstone National Park, in 1872.
- 1946: Commercial production of DDT (a very effective insecticide) begins in the US. Its use becomes widespread (in many nations) over the following years.
- 1962: Publication of "Silent Spring" by Rachel Carson, a groundbreaking book that raised awareness about the environmental impact of pesticides.
- 1970: The first Earth Day is celebrated.
- 1972: The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) bans the use of DDT in the United States for agricultural purposes, citing its adverse environmental effects, particularly on wildlife.
- 1972: The publication of "The Limits to Growth" by Donella Meadows, Dennis Meadows, and Jørgen Randers, which addressed concerns about the impact of human activity on the environment.
- 1972: Release of the song "Big Yellow Taxi" by Joni Mitchell, which brought attention to environmental issues, particularly the loss of natural spaces.
- 1987: The Montreal Protocol is established to phase out ozone-depleting substances.
- 1992: The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro leads to the creation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- 1997: The Kyoto Protocol is adopted, aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- 2006: Al Gore's documentary "An Inconvenient Truth" raises awareness about climate change and its potential consequences.
- 2011: The Fukushima disaster, Japan - a catastrophic nuclear accident in which there were multiple meltdowns, explosions, and the release of radioactive material.
- 2015: The Paris Agreement is reached, outlining global efforts to combat climate change.
- 2019: Greta Thunberg, a young Swedish activist, gains international attention for her efforts to combat climate change and promote environmental awareness.

*Source: AI Generated*





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