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Decolonizing Education and the Green Economy: Religious and Indigenous Resistance to Extraction in Indonesia

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Abstract

Indigenous communities in Indonesia often face serious challenges, especially when dealing with conflicts related to resistance to epistemic dominance in extractive economic practices. This resistance is manifested through a decolonial educational approach rooted in spiritual and religious values. This research uses a qualitative document analysis method, by examining various academic literature, laws and regulations, and empirical case studies. In this study, the form of resistance of indigenous peoples is not only physical or material, but also includes the dimension of knowledge and perspective on nature and development. This study specifically highlights the case of the Mollo and Orang Rimba communities, as well as the role of two major religious organizations in Indonesia, namely Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama. All three are understood as a more grounded alternative to the concept of green economy which tends to be state-centric. The ritual practices of indigenous peoples and religious fatwas are a form of profound criticism of the current direction of development. However, contradictions also arise when religious organizations begin to negotiate with community-oriented state policies. The researchers' findings suggest that the decolonization of education and the enforcement of ecological justice are crucial. Both function as a plural and inclusive epistemological foundation in responding to colonialism that has been rooted in the relationship between indigenous peoples, religions, and the state. Therefore, the active involvement of indigenous peoples and religious organizations that prioritize spiritual values as well as a commitment to ecological sustainability and environmental governance has the potential to realize a transformation towards a more just and sustainable life, within the framework of an ecological human rights that respects the rights of indigenous peoples.

Keywords: Decolonial Environmentalism, Green Economy, Indigenous Resistance, and Religious Organization.

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Introduction

The Southeast Asian region, especially Indonesia, is a region rich in natural resources, from spices to other biological riches. This wealth has been a contest in ecological economics for the past few decades. Various regional conflicts arise due to the expansion of extractive industries such as coal mining, oil palm plantations, and deforestation, which results in environmental degradation and triggers social conflicts (Hadiz, 2017; Mulyani & Jepson, 2015). This process is not only economic and environmental, but also political, because it raises questions about the customary rights of indigenous peoples, sovereignty over land, social and cultural survival, and the legitimacy of local knowledge in preserving nature. On the other hand, indigenous peoples are the most affected by this expansion. From this emerged resistance movements by indigenous communities and faith-based or religious-based groups, which interpreted their struggles spiritually and ecologically (Afiff & Rachman, 2019; Latour, 2004).

At the same time, the discourse on the green economy has gained international attention as a corrective effort against environmental exploitation. This concept is promoted by institutions such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP, 2011) and has been adopted in Indonesia through various climate and conservation related programs. The green economy promises synergy between economic growth and environmental conservation. However, critical studies show that this model often reproduces the colonial logic hidden behind the neoliberal framework (Escobar, 2018; Death, 2015). Instruments such as carbon trading, ecosystem services, and sustainable commodities are often packaged as technical solutions, but in reality, tend to marginalize local communities, obscure traditional knowledge systems, and strengthen top-down governance (Fletcher et al., 2016).

In Indonesia, contradictions in environmental policies emerge through various government-supported initiatives, such as the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) program and forest moratorium policies. These policies are often implemented without adequate recognition of indigenous land rights as well as local ecological epistemology (Myers et al., 2017). In many cases, such "green" policies actually expand the scope of extractive capitalism, while neutralizing the political claims of indigenous peoples and religious institutions.

A number of studies show that these dynamics reflect colonialism, namely an unequal relationship of power and knowledge (Quijano, 2000). In this context, Eurocentric understandings of nature and environmental governance tend to be privileged over pluralistic, contextual, and relational approaches to life (See, J., Cuaton, G. P., Placino, P., Vunibola, S., Do Thi, H., Dombroski, K., & McKinnon, K, 2024). While different countries have their own ways of dealing with the green economy, the situation in Indonesia has its own uniqueness (Lalander, R., Singh, N., Galindo, J. F., Maganga, F., Sjöling, S., & Lehtilä, K, 2025). In Canada, for example, there is a degrowth approach that supports Indigenous reconciliation (Gingrich, K., Brand-Correa, L., Howarth, E., & Stratton. A, 2025). In Europe and other developed countries, education focuses more on future-oriented environmental learning (Perkins. H, 2024). Meanwhile, Latin American and African countries face complex struggles over land and identity (Chaney, C., Kubica, M., Mansilla, L., & Valeggia, C. R, 2024).

These global examples show that each context has different challenges. However, this article focuses on Indonesia, where religious groups and Indigenous communities respond in ways that combine spirituality, ecology, and local knowledge. The experiences of the Mollo and Orang Rimba communities, along with the role of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, show how local actors resist extractive industries not just through protest, but by offering alternative ways of living and understanding nature. In addition, this paper highlights various forms of resistance carried out by communities, especially indigenous peoples and religious communities in Indonesia, as part of the epistemic and political critique of green economy discourse. These groups not only oppose extractivism in the material dimension, but also reframe ecological relations through rituals, theology, and pedagogy rooted in Indigenous knowledge. The resistance reflects a form of decolonial education, which is an effort to reclaim ontology, moral systems, and ways of learning that place a reciprocal relationship with nature, intergenerational knowledge, and the sanctity of the territory as the center.

Thus, this paper analyzes a number of cases, such as the struggle of the Mollo community in East Nusa Tenggara, the Orang Rimba community, and environmental advocacy carried out by religious organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama. Although both organizations have long advocated for sustainable environmental management, their involvement in the acceptance of coal mining concessions granted by the state in 2024 (Kompas, 2024) raises a moral dilemma and shows an ambivalent position between resistance and accommodation to the state's power structure. This paper argues that local actors oppose the extractive paradigm not only through protests, but also through the development of alternative ways of life and ecological imagination. These forms of resistance challenge technocratic dominance in global environmental governance, as well as offer alternative paths based on customary sovereignty, spiritual ethics, and communal learning practices.

This article uses qualitative document analysis methods sourced from secondary data, including academic literature, policy documents, case studies, fatwas, and previous fieldwork reports. This study synthesizes these various sources to examine the socio-legal and epistemological dimensions of the resistance of indigenous peoples and religious communities in Indonesia. The structure of this article is divided into several main sections. The first part discusses colonialism inherent in the dominant green economy paradigm, highlighting how power and knowledge are constructed and operationalized in environmental policy. The second part explores the emergence of decolonial educational practices rooted in traditional and religious traditions, as a form of resistance to extractive development models. The third part presents empirical case studies from various regions in Indonesia, which showcase the life experiences and resistance strategies of local communities. The final section reflects on the implications of the findings on policy, as well as offers a conceptual framework for building an ecologically fair and decolonial-oriented green economy.

Coloniality of Power, Knowledge, and Nature in the Green Economy

The green economy, as defined by UNEP (2011), is "an economy that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and

ecological scarcities." It emphasizes the decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation, achieved through mechanisms such as renewable energy investment, carbon markets, sustainable land use, and ecosystem services valuation. In Indonesia, the green economy has been implemented through various policy instruments: REDD+ schemes (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), forest moratorium policies, climate-smart agriculture, and eco-tourism zones (Indrarto et al., 2012).

While ostensibly progressive, these programs have drawn substantial critique for functioning as technocratic enclosures that obscure socio-ecological histories and displace local authority over land and nature (Fletcher, Dressler, & Büscher, 2016). Under the banner of "sustainability," the green economy often perpetuates extractive logic—recasting forests as carbon sinks, watersheds as ecosystem services, and Indigenous territories as green investment zones. As such, the green economy is not a rupture from previous development models but a mutation of colonial-capitalist rationalities, wherein nature continues to be commodified and managed for elite benefit (Büscher & Fletcher, 2020; Death, 2015).

In Indonesia, these dynamics manifest through opaque land concessions, top-down environmental regulations, and the marginalization of customary (*adat*) land claims. The REDD+ program, though internationally celebrated, has faced resistance for excluding forest-dependent communities from decision-making processes and for consolidating state and corporate control over territories historically governed by Indigenous institutions (Myers et al., 2017). The promotion of carbon markets has likewise enabled transnational actors to profit from carbon sequestration credits, while communities bear the burden of restricted access to traditional livelihoods.

The promise of the green economy restoring ecosystems and achieving ecological justice is thus undercut by its predatory form of implementation. It displaces the very communities whose cosmologies, practices, and ethics have sustained the forests for generations. Far from being a neutral policy tool, the green economy operates through what Escobar (2008) calls the economization of nature, reshaping environmental governance in ways that entrench global capitalist hierarchies under a "green" veneer.

The operation of the green economy in Indonesia reveals a deeper epistemic injustice what decolonial theorists term the coloniality of knowledge (Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2009). Modern environmental governance is shaped predominantly by technocratic expertise: satellite imagery, GIS mapping, carbon stock calculations, and ecological modeling. These tools are often considered objective and universal. However, they rest on epistemological foundations that privilege eurocentric scientific paradigms and systematically exclude Indigenous knowledge systems that are oral, spiritual, relational, and embedded in place-based ethics.

Environmental decision-making bodies from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry to international donor agencies rarely integrate the ecological knowledge of Indigenous communities as authoritative or policy-relevant. Rather, such knowledge is treated as anecdotal or symbolic, insufficiently "scientific" to guide land use planning or climate mitigation (Sundar, 2000; Agrawal, 1995). In this way, Indigenous cosmologies which often understand the forest as a sentient being or a sacred ancestral entity are marginalized in favor of managerial paradigms that reduce forests to quantifiable carbon units.

This epistemic marginalization is not merely academic it has material consequences. The exclusion of Indigenous perspectives in environmental governance leads to interventions that are ecologically inappropriate, socially unjust, and culturally violent. For example, conservation zoning that prohibits swidden agriculture or ritual forest use not only disrupts food systems, but desecrates spiritual relationships with the land (Li, 2007).

Moreover, the fetishization of "best practices" and "global standards" in green governance reinforces an epistemological monoculture that denies the validity of plural worldviews. It reproduces what Santos (2014) terms epistemicide the systematic erasure of non-Western ways of knowing. In response, many communities in Indonesia are not only resisting the material impacts of extractivism, but also reclaiming their right to know, name, and narrate the forest according to their own ontologies.

In this context, resistance is not only political but epistemic. Indigenous and religious actors alike are increasingly articulating their knowledge as valid, moral, and necessary for the future of ecological governance. This reclamation whether through interfaith environmental declarations, customary law revitalization, or eco-pesantren education is the subject of the following section, which explores how decolonizing education becomes a mode of resisting the knowledge regimes that sustain extractive economies.

Decolonizing Education as Resistance: The Role of Religion and Indigenous Knowledge

Education is never neutral. It either functions as a tool of domination or as a means of liberation (Freire, 1970). In the context of Indonesia's extractive development, formal education has historically mirrored the epistemologies of the state, prioritizing industrial progress, resource exploitation, and modernization over Indigenous knowledge, religious ethics, and ecological consciousness. Schools and universities often act as vehicles for what Fanon (1963) described as the "colonization of the mind," reproducing colonial logics of superiority—of science over spirituality, of technocracy over local wisdom, of human over nature.

This epistemological hegemony is central to extractive economies: it justifies deforestation, mining, and land grabs as necessary for national growth, while silencing Indigenous and religious narratives that position land as sacred and interdependent. The consequence is a generational dislocation from ecological identity and ancestral knowledge.

However, across Indonesia, diverse communities are reclaiming education as a site of decolonial resistance. From eco-pesantren movements in Java to *adat* (custom) led schooling in Kalimantan, alternative pedagogies are emerging that center Indigenous spirituality, religious stewardship, and environmental ethics. These practices reject the dualistic, hierarchical epistemologies of colonial modernity and affirm relational worldviews—ones in which forests, rivers, animals, and ancestors are teachers, not resources.

For instance, pesantren-based education that incorporates Qur'anic principles of *khalīfah* (vicegerency) and *amānah* (trust) into environmental care has gained traction in Islamic schools aiming to align faith with sustainability (Pudjiastuti et al., 2021). Such models not only impart ecological knowledge but instill moral responsibility rooted in divine accountability (Syarif, 2020). Meanwhile, Indigenous communities in Papua and Maluku are

revitalizing informal systems of ecological education that involve storytelling, ritual, and forest apprenticeship—pedagogies that de-emphasize textual instruction and re-embed learners within land-based knowledge systems (Afiff & Rachman, 2019).

Religious and Indigenous communities are not merely reacting to ecological destruction; they are advancing embodied forms of resistance grounded in cosmologies that challenge the ontological foundations of extractivism. These cosmologies do not separate the material from the spiritual, nor the human from the ecological. Instead, they affirm relational ontologies, wherein land, ancestors, spirits, and the divine are woven into a moral and ecological whole (Haq et al., 2024).

In Islam, the concept of *mīzān* (balance) and *fasād* (corruption) provides a theological grammar for understanding ecological degradation as a spiritual crisis (Nasr, 1996). Organizations like Nahdlatul Ulama's LAKPESDAM and Muhammadiyah's Majelis Tarjih have issued fatwas and declarations that affirm environmental protection as an Islamic duty. These religious pronouncements do not simply raise awareness—they repoliticize environmentalism by framing it within sacred obligation and collective ethics (Abdillah, 2001). However, the current trend of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama approving the government's granting of coal mining concessions is also a further criticism, but one that is not addressed in this paper (Kompas, 2024).

Similarly, Indigenous resistance in places like Dayak territory often arises from ritual cosmopolitics—that is, the defense of sacred forests not only as economic resources but as spiritual domains inhabited by ancestor spirits and tutelary deities (Li, 2016). In such contexts, logging or mining is not only illegal or unsustainable—it is profoundly profane (Li, 2016). Resistance, therefore, becomes an act of spiritual justice as much as political survival. Moreover, alliances between Indigenous and religious actors are forging new solidarities that transcend categorical divisions. Faith-based environmental movements—such as the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI), coordinated globally but active in Indonesia through multi-stakeholder forums held both in Jakarta and forest regions like Kalimantan—create spaces where adat leaders, Christian pastors, and Muslim scholars collaborate in defense of forests (World Resources Institute, 2021). This intersection of religion and indigeneity generates a decolonial praxis that is at once spiritual, ecological, and political. It challenges the capitalist ontology that views land as dead matter and instead affirms a living, sacred Earth—what Escobar (2018) terms the pluriverse. In doing so, it not only resists the material expansion of extractive industries but also the epistemological violence that renders Indigenous and religious knowledge obsolete.

Such pedagogical practices embody Mignolo's (2009) concept of epistemic disobedience, rejecting the imposed universality of Western scientific knowledge by re-centering relational, spiritual, and place-based ecologies of knowing. In doing so, Indigenous and religious education offer not only knowledge transmission but epistemological sovereignty.

Case Studies of Resistance: Indigenous and Religious Communities in Practice

This section explores grounded expressions of resistance by Indigenous and religious communities across Indonesia, emphasizing their cosmological, spiritual, and political modes of contestation against extractive economies. These cases challenge the idea that resistance

is purely oppositional; rather, it is generative, drawing from ontologies of care, stewardship, and sacred ecology.

First, The Mollo people of East Nusa Tenggara, exemplify a form of resistance that is deeply rooted in spiritual cosmology. When marble mining projects threatened their ancestral lands in the 1990s and 2000s, the community—particularly Mollo women—mobilized a defense not only of territory, but of a sacred landscape interwoven with identity and cosmology (Bakker, 2016).

Among the Mollo, rocks (*fatu*), water sources, forests, and mountains are more than ecological resources; they are sentient entities and spiritual kin. As the Indigenous activist Aleta Baun describes, "We don't just live on the land, we live with the land" (Baun, cited in Padawangi, 2014). Mining operations were thus experienced as both material dispossession and cosmological violence, threatening the intricate spiritual relations between people and place.

In an act of embodied resistance, Mollo women initiated a weaving protest—occupying mining sites while weaving traditional textiles (*tais*) (Wulan, 2019). This protest re-centered women's traditional knowledge and spiritual authority, transforming cultural expression into political resistance (Wulan, 2019). Their tactics did not rely on armed conflict or formal litigation but on cultural praxis and ceremonial disruption of capitalist extraction.

This case reflects what Escobar (2008) calls a "pluriversal politics"—a politics that does not seek to reform the system but to sustain other worlds. It also aligns with feminist environmentalism, where ecological defense is inseparable from gendered knowledge and care labor (Shiva, 1989).

These embodied resistances not only oppose extractive intrusions but enact epistemological alternatives that sustain pluriversal ontologies, where forests are not carbon stock units but sacred kin (Escobar, 2018). Through such practices, Indigenous women become agents of both ecological defense and knowledge production (Shiva, 1989).

Second, Religious resistance is also manifest in Islamic mass organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which have increasingly positioned themselves as moral critics of extractive development in Indonesia. Both organizations have engaged in environmental advocacy not only as a matter of human responsibility (*taklīf*), but as part of a broader commitment to maqāṣid al-sharīʿah—the higher objectives of Islamic law, including the protection of life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*), and the environment (*ḥifẓ al-bī'ah*) (Ammar, 2021).

Muhammadiyah, for instance, has issued fatwas and initiated environmental education through Green Schools, while advocating for renewable energy and critiquing state policies that allow forest and peatland destruction. Its Fatwa on Environmental Protection (Fatwa Majelis Tarjih No. 7/2015) frames ecological degradation as a violation of divine trust (amānah) and a moral failure that disrupts the balance (*mīzān*) of creation (Safi'i, 2020).

NU has employed a *fiqh al-bī'ah* (jurisprudence of the environment) approach, integrating Islamic law with local ecological wisdom, particularly in rural pesantren and community-based initiatives. NU's Fiqh of Water and Forests has been utilized to support communities resisting deforestation and palm oil expansion in Kalimantan and Sumatra

(Nasir, 2022). These organizations not only provide theological resources but also mobilize ulama, students, and laypersons to act as eco-guardians within their local contexts.

What is striking in these religious movements is the shift from an anthropocentric to an ecocentric theological ethic, one that redefines development not as GDP growth but as the preservation of the Earth's sacred equilibrium. This opens a pathway for a Sharia-based environmentalism that critiques both state developmentalism and capitalist extractivism.

Third, The Orang Rimba, a forest-dwelling Indigenous people in Jambi, Sumatra, offer a different mode of resistance—one where religion, custom (*adat*), and ecology are indivisible. Their worldview understands the forest not as property or resource, but as ancestral life-space (*rumah besar*) governed by spiritual beings, taboos (*pantang*), and rituals that sustain balance (Muntholib et al., 2020).

The expansion of oil palm plantations, logging concessions, and state forest zoning has led to massive displacement and criminalization of Orang Rimba practices. State narratives of "civilizing" nomadic peoples and integrating them into national religion (especially Islam) and economy clash with the cosmological sovereignty that Orang Rimba assert over their territories (Muntholib et al., 2020). Government programs that seek to sedentarize them in "transmigration-style" villages have been resisted through quiet return, ritual performance, and evasion (Colchester, 2011).

Their resistance is not articulated in formal legal language but through ritual avoidance of violated lands, mourning ceremonies for dead forests, and the reassertion of sacred geographies. For example, Orang Rimba leaders have refused compensation payments and public services in exchange for abandoning their forests, signalling that value is not reducible to economic equivalence (Colchester, 2011).

Moreover, Orang Rimba spirituality—though often misread by outsiders as animist or primitive—constitutes a form of environmental jurisprudence, with taboos functioning as conservation law and spiritual sanctioning mechanisms replacing police or courts. This ontological resistance refuses the very terms of modern legality, demanding a recognition of forest-as-sovereign-subject rather than object of use.

Toward a Decolonial Green Economy in Indonesia: A Socio Legal Movement

Indonesia presents a complex legal terrain marked by the coexistence of state, religious, and customary law—a reality often described as legal pluralism. However, the dominance of state-centric legal regimes has historically marginalized Indigenous legal systems, especially in matters of land tenure and natural resource governance (Bedner & Arizona, 2019). The post-Reformasi era has witnessed increasing recognition of Indigenous peoples' rights, notably through the 2012 Constitutional Court Decision No. 35/PUU-X/2012, which affirmed that customary forests are not part of state forest areas. Yet, implementation remains elusive, with many communities continuing to face criminalization, displacement, and land grabbing in the name of national development (Bedner & Arizona, 2019).

Legal recognition, when it occurs, is often conditional upon bureaucratic certification that paradoxically requires Indigenous groups to translate their fluid, oral-based systems into rigid legal categories (Butt, 2014). This formalization process can itself be extractive, stripping

Indigenous law of its spiritual and ecological foundations to fit within neoliberal governance frameworks.

Despite these limitations, Indigenous communities are engaging in legal resistance through litigation, advocacy, and strategic alliances with NGOs, legal aid institutions, and religious groups. For example, the AMAN (Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara) has played a critical role in pushing for national and local recognition of Indigenous territories, while also training paralegals and adat judges to assert community-based jurisprudence in environmental conflicts.

This legal mobilization is not simply a demand for rights within the existing system but often a reclaiming of sovereignty over knowledge, governance, and the sacred relationship between people and land. As Tsing (2005) argues, resistance in such contexts is not always loud or spectacular—it often manifests in everyday practices of mapping, ritual, planting, and storytelling that sustain lifeworld's under siege.

Religious communities in Indonesia are also participating in legal struggles by mobilizing faith-based ethical frameworks as counter-power to state and corporate hegemony. For instance, Muhammadiyah's issuance of a Fatwa on Environmental Preservation (Fatwa Majelis Tarjih No. 7/2015) and Nahdlatul Ulama's Fiqh of Water and Forests (Fiqh Al-Miyah and Al-Ghabat) represent a theological assertion of sovereignty over the ecological domain, rooted in Shariah principles of public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*) and harm prevention (*dar' al-mafāsid*).

Such religious legal declarations challenge the monopoly of the state over normativity. They transform the discourse of environmental rights from one grounded solely in secular legality to one infused with divine obligation, spiritual accountability, and moral cosmology. This shift opens new avenues for mobilization, especially in rural and faith-based constituencies where state law often lacks legitimacy or reach.

Notably, these religious interventions often draw from broader Islamic legal principles that emphasize ecological balance (*mīzān*), prohibition of harm (*lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār*), and the trusteeship of human beings over the earth (*khilāfah fī al-arḍ*) (Ammar, 2021). When applied to contemporary environmental struggles, such principles offer a living jurisprudence of resistance—a sacred framework through which communities can confront extractive power not just as illegal, but as sinful.

Furthermore, this theocratic-ecological stance aligns with the global movement for ecological Shariah, a growing field where Islamic environmentalism intersects with transnational legal discourses on sustainability, social justice, and Indigenous sovereignty (Ammar, 2021).

Nevertheless, the intersection of state law, customary law, and religious law is fraught with tension and fragmentation. In some cases, state-recognized Islamic leaders may endorse extractive projects in the name of development, while community-based ulama or Indigenous spiritual leaders oppose them on moral grounds. Similarly, adat leaders may be co-opted by mining companies, fracturing collective resistance.

To navigate this landscape, multi-layered legal strategies are increasingly adopted. Communities employ a mix of litigation, customary ceremony, religious mobilization, and international advocacy to assert their claims. The case of the Mollo people in East Nusa

Tenggara resisting marble mining through a combination of adat rituals, Christian theology, and environmental campaigns exemplifies this juridical pluralism in action (Padawangi, 2014).

These hybrid strategies signal a move toward what Santos (2007) calls a "subaltern cosmopolitan legality"—a legal order that transcends the liberal state, drawing from multiple traditions to articulate justice from below. In the Indonesian context, this means a decolonial legal ecology where the sacred, the customary, and the constitutional are not mutually exclusive but coalesce to defend land, life, and community.

This interplay of adat law, Islamic fatwas, and state regulations illustrates Santos (2007) notion of subaltern cosmopolitan legality—a pluriversal legal assemblage where multiple knowledge systems assert legal authority over land and resources. In these hybrid spaces, legitimacy emerges not from state codification alone, but from interwoven spiritual, customary, and communal obligations.

Reclaiming Knowledge: Indigenous and Religious Epistemologies Against Extractive Modernity

The dominance of extractive capitalism in Indonesia is not merely an economic reality, it is deeply rooted in an epistemological order that privileges Western rationality over Indigenous and religious modes of knowing (de Sousa Santos, 2014). This dynamic has led to the marginalization of ecological wisdom embedded in local and religious traditions, effectively rendering these communities as "backward" or "irrational" in the face of development imperatives (de Sousa Santos, 2014). In response, Indigenous and religious actors have increasingly positioned themselves as critical agents of resistance. That is not just in terms of land defense, but also in the reclamation of knowledge systems.

For instance, the Orang Rimba and Dayak communities have long resisted the homogenizing influence of corporate logging and palm oil concessions, drawing upon *adat* (customary law) as both a legal and spiritual framework for environmental stewardship. These communities' resistance aligns with what Escobar (2018) calls the "pluriverse" a world where many worlds fit. Such a pluriversal perspective stands in sharp contrast to the unilinear narrative of development promoted by the state and its industrial allies.

Islamic institutions in Indonesia have similarly begun to articulate environmental ethics that critique extractivism. Muhammadiyah's Fatwa No. 01/2010 on the conservation of ecosystems and Nahdlatul Ulama's *Fiqh al-Bi'ah* both demonstrate how Islamic jurisprudence can evolve into a framework for ecological resistance. These religious discourses not only provide theological legitimacy to environmental protection but also mobilize vast social capital among grassroots constituencies (Ammar, 2021; Safi'i, 2020).

Research also suggests that when Indigenous knowledge is integrated with formal environmental governance, the outcomes are often more sustainable and equitable. A study by Larson and Soto (2008) found that decentralization policies in Latin America, when coupled with Indigenous autonomy, enabled more inclusive and effective forest governance. Although the Indonesian decentralization experience is distinct, similar dynamics are observable in regions where adat institutions are recognized, such as West Kalimantan and Papua (Myers et al., 2017).

Yet, despite this promise, the co-optation of Indigenous and religious discourses remains a real threat. Market-based mechanisms like REDD+ often neutralize resistance by translating local struggles into technocratic terms (Fletcher et al., 2016). This underscores the importance of not only including marginalized voices but also respecting the epistemological autonomy of their frameworks. As Mignolo (2009) argues, true decolonization entails "epistemic disobedience" the refusal to think within the colonial matrix of power.

Therefore, resisting extractivism demands not merely participatory inclusion but a re-centering of Indigenous and religious epistemologies as valid knowledge systems. This epistemic justice challenges the coloniality embedded within dominant green economy frameworks and allows for pluriversal governance models rooted in sacred reciprocity.

Conclusion

This article provides a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of indigenous and religious peoples in Indonesia, as well as the various forms of resistance carried out by indigenous communities to conflicts arising from extractive economic practices. This resistance is reflected in alternative cosmology as well as a spiritual framework that includes social, political, and environmental aspects. Indigenous communities are often marginalized, but they continue to articulate their views in a counter-hegemonic manner. This view challenges the colonial legacy that is still embedded in the development model, environmental governance, and national education system. Furthermore, the experience of the Mollo community, Orang Rimba, and religious organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama shows that the form of resistance they carry out is not solely a form of opposition. Instead, they express a more comprehensive way of life, one that rejects the separation between religious spiritual meaning and ecological relationships. These actors are not only demanding inclusion in the state-led sustainable development framework. Instead, they are redefining the meaning of sustainability itself, relying on ancestral wisdom, sacred laws, and cosmological responsibility to the universe.

Education and the green economy play a significant role in the process of knowledge transmission towards a more just and ecological paradigm shift. First, the decolonization of education demands a shift from mere transmission of knowledge to the recognition of epistemic diversity. This approach emphasizes epistemic justice by recognizing that the world of life of indigenous peoples and religious communities is a legitimate source for the development of theory, ethics, and pedagogy (de Sousa Santos, 2014; Andreotti, 2011). The current environmental curriculum still too often reproduces the dominant epistemology of the global-North, while marginalizing the local sacred ecology and cross-generational knowledge of local communities. Second, the vision of a "green economy" needs to be saved from its framework, which is currently still trapped in the capitalistic growth paradigm. Instead, the green economy must be reorganized as a pluriveral economic ecology of a system in which land is no longer positioned as a commodity, but rather as a kinship relationship; where the practice of extraction is not considered a form of progress, but as an act of desecration; and where economic activities are rooted in cultural values, spirituality, and ecological concern (Gómez-Baggethun & Naredo, 2015; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). The implications of this framework require that policymakers involve scholars, religious leaders,

indigenous leaders, and civil society in the discourse of religious ecological epistemology. Recognition of the role of these actors must be integrated into public policy through regulations, jurisprudence, and green environment-based management practices as part of sustainable governance. Thus, the green economy has not only become a global discourse, but has transformed into an epistemic bridge at the national level that plays a role in dismantling the colonial legacy in education and development. In the midst of the climate crisis and global ecological degradation, orientation to indigenous communities is not only a form of resistance, but also an expression of a reorientation of life based on ecological justice and spirituality that is one with nature.

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