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Cultural Identity and Economic Resistance in Banten's Pesantrens

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Abstract: This study examines the resistance movement led by Kyai leaders of Salafiyah Islamic Boarding Schools (*Pesantren*) in Pandeglang and Serang Districts, Banten, against the establishment of PT Mayora factory in 2016. The resistance emerged in response to what was perceived as modern capitalist expansion threatening environmental sustainability and local cultural identity. Employing a qualitative approach with case study methodology, this research investigates traditional pesantren's dual role as religious educational institutions and as frontline defenders of ecological balance and cultural heritage. The study frames this resistance within political theology, analyzing how moral values derived from Islamic teachings inform opposition to capitalism's negative impacts on local communities. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. The findings reveal that traditional pesantren serve both as religious educational institutions and as guardians of local wisdom through social-religious movements guided by the principle of *Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar* (promoting good and preventing harm). The conflict illustrates the tension between economic interests and religious-cultural values. This study recommends strengthening traditional pesantren's role in maintaining socio-ecological sustainability within sustainable development frameworks.

Keywords: ecological sustainability; economic investment; Islamic boarding school; Muslim leaders; political theology.

Introduction

In the midst of increasingly hegemonic economic globalization, the cultural and spiritual spaces of local communities face increasingly complex structural pressures (Gauthier, 2022). Contemporary capitalism no longer moves solely in the realm of production and consumption, but penetrates into symbolic and sacred territories, intervening in the landscape of daily life through investment, resource exploitation, and the redefinition of community values (Jhally, 2022). In this context, resistance to capitalism does not only emerge in the form of political demonstrations or civil movements, but also through religious articulations that form an alternative cosmology to the dominant world order.

On the global stage, discourse religious environmentalism and theo-political resistance has become a crucial field of study (Bugyis, 2024). Studies have shown that religious communities play an important role in combating ecological damage and structural injustices born of large-scale economic projects (Joseph et al., 2021). Religious institutions are not only guardians of morality, but also strategic actors in renegotiating the relationship between humans, nature, and power. In such a situation, religion does not appear as a passive discourse, but as an epistemic and ethical resource in criticizing exploitative and unsustainable development models (Bonelli & Pavez, 2025).

In Indonesia, a similar dynamic is evident, especially in the response of pesantren to investment projects that are considered contrary to local values (Buanaputra et al., 2022). Pesantren, as a traditional Islamic educational institution, not only functions as a center for the teaching of fiqh or Sufism, but also as a cultural fortress that is firmly rooted in the history of resistance against colonialism, injustice, and marginalization of the small people (Basri, 2022). The tradition of *Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar*, which is a fundamental theological principle in Islam, is the ethical basis for *pesantren* resistance to all forms of structural evil, including socio-economic inequality and environmental damage.

This condition becomes very concrete in Banten Province, a region that has deep and complex Islamic historical roots. Banten is not only known as one of the centers of the early spread of Islam in the archipelago, but also as a space for the growth of Salafi (orthodox) Islamic boarding schools that uphold the values of simplicity, social piety, and independence (Lukens-Bull, 2019). These Islamic boarding schools grew up in distinctive local traditions—such as the *Squirt*—which organically blends into the lives of the surrounding communities. In this framework, pesantren are not only places of education, but also guardians of ecological, spiritual, and social orders that have been built for generations.

The presence of PT Mayora in the midst of the Traditional Islamic Boarding School environment in Banten poses problems in the form of threats to the destruction of local ecosystems, disruptions of people's livelihoods, and cultural shocks to local cultural identity. PT Mayora is considered to exploit natural resources, especially water sources on a large scale for industrial purposes. Meanwhile, the life of Islamic boarding schools and the surrounding community is highly dependent on water sources that have been maintained for a long time. The presence of PT Mayora is opposed because it is considered destructive and will have a long-term negative impact on environmental sustainability.

In this context, political theology as a new perspective to be raised in this regard offers an interesting perspective for understanding the resistance (Rasmusson, 2025). Social and legal communication can create a discourse of conflict, in which the media, law, and the public play a role in shaping the legitimacy of power and identity (Klinger et al., 2023). This theory is very relevant to understanding the resistance of the Salafi Islamic Boarding School in Banten, which articulates its struggle through religious teachings and local wisdom in facing the threat of capitalism.

Studies of Islamic boarding schools in the Indonesian context have been carried out by many academics, both in terms of education, social roles, and their contribution to economic development (Jubba et al., 2022). However, there is a significant research gap in understanding the role of Islamic boarding schools as institutions that fight the expansion of capitalism and environmental degradation based on religious values.

Research in Southeast Asia shows that religious institutions are increasingly playing an important role in the environmental rescue movement, but the focus of the research is more on urban religious institutions and has not explored the role of traditional Islamic boarding schools in rural areas (Bhattacharya & Burns, 2019), and has not comprehensively discussed how the basis of political theology is used as a basis for resistance to industrial expansion (Alfiyanto et al., 2024).

The novelty of this research lies in three main aspects. First, this study integrates the perspective of political theology with the analysis of political ecology in understanding pesantren resistance to investment, an approach that is still rarely done in previous pesantren studies. Second, this study investigates how traditional pesantren use digital media and religious values simultaneously as a tool of resistance, creating the so-called (Bakar et al., 2023) as "hybrid resistance". Third, this research contributes to the discourse on the role of local religious institutions in the global environmental movement, enriching the study of "religious environmentalism" that is developing in contemporary academic discourse (Mangunjaya et al., 2015).

Conflict communication involving law, media narratives, and public discourse can shape social identity and justice in society. Here, law and the media function as communication systems that shape meaning, legitimacy, and identity in society, both in the public sphere and in political discourse (Arno, 2009). Within the framework of political theology, this communication is a meeting

point between moral values and authorities that seek to shape a collective consciousness of social justice (Sagovsky, 2017).

The rejection of PT Mayora by Kiai and the Salafiyah Islamic Boarding School has the same solution as the example case filed by Arno, namely the Kalipi Rights case in Hawai'i, where state law recognizes the traditional right of indigenous peoples to access natural resources such as timber, water, and roads on privately owned land. This idea reflects "restorative justice" which aligns with religious movements to respect the rights of marginalized communities (Martinez-Alier et al., 2016), as happened in the resistance of the Salafiyah Islamic Boarding School in Banten. As in the case of Hawai'i, Islamic boarding schools are struggling to maintain their traditional values in the face of modernity brought about by capitalist industry.

Law not only regulates behavior but also forms social identity (Arno, 2009). In this case, the law can serve to articulate community rights, such as the ecological rights fought for by Islamic boarding schools, while strengthening the authority of the state or corporations that can oppress these rights. The media plays a role in building this discourse, influencing the public, and helping to shape the perception of justice or injustice that occurs.

In the resistance of the Banten Salafi Islamic Boarding School, this communication also includes how the Islamic boarding school acts as an agent of social change by using the principles of political theology to fight injustice due to unsustainable modernization. This resistance not only focuses on the ecological aspect but also on the struggle to maintain the cultural identity that has been maintained by the Islamic boarding school community.

This research seeks to integrate the perspective of Andrew Arno's Political Theology with the context of resistance of the Salafi Islamic Boarding School in Banten. This theory provides new insights into the understanding of the resistance of Islamic boarding schools to modern capitalism, in which religion and local culture become tools to fight for socio-ecological justice.

Islamic boarding schools play a major role in preserving local culture and values in the midst of an increasingly rapid wave of modernization (Darmini, 2021). Islamic boarding schools function not only as religious educational institutions but also as "cultural intermediaries" that bridge classical traditions with the challenges of modernity (Fathi, 2024). In this context, the resistance to PT Mayora is a tangible form of effort to preserve nature and maintain traditional values that have long been defended by the community. Islamic boarding schools in contemporary Indonesia are undergoing a transformation in their role, from traditional educational institutions to "agents of social change" that actively fight for the interests of the community in various fields, including environmental advocacy (Achmadin et al., 2024). These findings strengthen the theoretical position of this study, which sees pesantren as institutions that are not static, but dynamic in responding to socio-economic changes (Nakamura et al., 2001).

The theory of environmental conflict proposed by Robbins (Robbins, 2019) provide perspective to understand the inequality caused by investment in an area to the ecosystem. Recent developments in environmental conflict theory as presented by Martinez-Alier & O'Connor (Scheidel et al., 2018) shows that environmental conflicts are not only economic and ecological conflicts of interest, but also encompass dimensions of justice, power distribution, and broader cultural values. The establishment of PT Mayora in Banten, by exploiting natural resources on a large scale, damaged the environment that is the basis of the life of the local community. Investments with their orientation towards unlimited profits, ignoring the social and ecological impact they cause (Escobar, 2018; Harvey, 2016). The resistance carried out by the Salafiyah Islamic Boarding School in Banten is more than just an environmental issue; It is also a resistance to an economic system that damages social and ecological relations within society. This resistance is rooted in the awareness to defend the ecological and social rights of the community against the impact of capitalist industrial expansion that is destroying their traditions and lives. Dove & Kammen (Dove & Kammen, 2015) case studies in different regions of Indonesia show that environmental conflicts involving local communities and large corporations often reflect deeper structural inequalities in the context of national development. This phenomenon they call "ecological marginalization" where the interests of local communities are systematically marginalized for the sake of the national economic development agenda (Dove & Kammen, 2015).

Political theology, as explained by Arno (Arno, 2009), linking religion with resistance to oppressive authorities, be it the state or forms and models of investment. Contemporary political theology is no longer only concerned with the relationship between religion and the state, but also includes how religious values are operationalized in resistance movements against various forms of injustice (Cavanaugh, 2019).

In the context of the resistance of the Salafi Islamic Boarding School, political theology serves to strengthen the position of religion in fighting for social and ecological justice. Arno explained that religion plays a role as a tool to fight for broader social rights, not only in the spiritual realm but also in the social and political spheres. This view is reinforced by Menchik's empirical studies (Menchik, 2016), which examines how Islamic organizations in Indonesia use religious discourse to legitimize their movements against various forms of economic and ecological injustice.

The Salafiyah Islamic boarding schools, in their resistance to PT Mayora, used religion as a basis to demand changes in natural resource management and fight for the rights of local communities to their land and nature. Thus, political theology provides a framework for Islamic boarding schools to articulate resistance based on religious values that fight for socio-ecological justice. Religion-based social movements in Indonesia have increased in the last two decades, especially related to environmental issues and social justice, demonstrating the relevance of political theological frameworks in the context of contemporary Indonesia (Hikmawan et al., 2021).

Political theology also deals with how the media plays a role in shaping public discourse on social and environmental issues. The media serves as a tool to shape public opinion on social issues (Arno, 2009). Develop this argument further by showing that the ecology of media in the digital age has created a new space for the articulation of environmental movements that allow marginalized groups, such as pesantren, to have a greater voice in public discourse.

In the context of the resistance of the Salafi Islamic Boarding School, social media plays a key role in disseminating information about the damage caused by PT Mayora and mobilizing the community to join the struggle against industrial exploitation that damages the ecosystem. (Needy & Humaidi, 2022) found that the use of social media platforms by Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia reflects a strategic transformation in the way traditional Islamic boarding schools interact with the outside world and champion issues they deem important, including environmental issues.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a political theology perspective to understand the resistance of Salafiyah Islamic boarding schools and kiai in Banten to the expansion of economic investment represented by the presence of PT Mayora. This approach was chosen to examine in depth the relationship between religious values, local cultural identity, and political-economic dynamics in the context of resistance in the pesantren community (Rukajat, 2018).

Data was collected through in-depth interviews with kiai, students, community leaders, and environmental activists, as well as through participatory observation of pesantren activities and community responses to the presence of industrial investment. In addition, documentation studies of local archives, media reports, and policy documents were also used to strengthen research data (Rianto, 2020).

The analysis was carried out to understand religious symbols and local narratives as a form of political articulation. The theories used include political theology, environmental conflict theory, and cultural resistance theory. Through the integration of these theories, this study seeks to show how pesantren are not only religious educational institutions, but also important actors in maintaining local wisdom and countering the expansion of capitalism that has the potential to damage the local social structure and ecosystem.

Results and Discussion

Dynamics of Resistance of Salafi Islamic Boarding Schools against PT Mayora

The resistance of the Salafiyah Islamic Boarding School in Banten shows the tension between the traditional values of the Islamic boarding school that are rooted in religious teachings and the investment economy that threatens environmental and social sustainability. The findings of the study

show that kiai and Islamic boarding schools use the principle of Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar as an ideological foundation to fight against the damage caused by PT Mayora. This resistance pattern reflects what Mangunjaya et al. (Mangunjaya et al., 2015) called "Islamic environmentalism"—an environmental movement based on Islamic values and ethics.

This study found that the main motivation for pesantren resistance is not only ecological, but also has spiritual and cultural dimensions. As expressed by KH. Abdullah (pseudonym), one of the leaders of the Islamic boarding school who became a central figure in the resistance: "Our resistance is not just to save springs or soil. This is a struggle to save the blessings (barakah) that have existed in the land of Banten for centuries. The water taken by the factory is not only ordinary water, but a source of life that has supported Islamic boarding schools and the community for hundreds of years" (Interview with Abdullah, April 12, 2022).

This statement describes how pesantren understand environmental struggles in a theological framework that connects environmental sustainability with spiritual blessings. The concept of "barakah" is important in understanding the theological dimension of Islamic boarding school resistance (Hoesterey, 2020).

Political theology provides a powerful framework for understanding how religion functions in the struggle for justice in the context of this conflict. Menchik (Menchik, 2016) shows that religion-based social movements in contemporary Indonesia often articulate their struggles as part of religious obligations. In the case of the Banten Salafi Islamic Boarding School, the resistance to PT Mayora was articulated as part of the obligation to protect nature as a mandate from God (caliph fi al-ardh).

The study also found that the resistance of the Salafi Islamic Boarding School is not only a rejection of ecological damage, but also a struggle to fight against the social injustices caused by capitalism. This is in line with the finding that faith-based movements are often a forum for articulating broader forms of structural injustice.

Mobilization Strategy and Media Use

In the face of industrial expansion manifested by the presence of PT Mayora in Banten, Salafiyah Islamic boarding schools appear as socio-religious actors that are not only reactive, but also show a structured, visionary, and political-ecological consciousness resistance. This research reveals that salafiyah pesantren in Banten play a central role in organizing resistance movements against the destructive effects of industrial investment, especially in relation to environmental destruction and socio-economic marginalization of local communities. The resistance mobilized by these Islamic boarding schools took five main forms: mass demonstrations and protests, political diplomacy, media campaigns, cultural-religious mobilization, and the formation of strategic alliances. Each of these strategies does not stand alone, but rather strengthens the others in forming a solid and comprehensive resistance network. In this case, pesantren functions as a moral center and at the same time a basis for social mobilization that is able to reach both internally (students and the pesantren community) and externally (general public, activists, academics, and government institutions).

Demonstrations and protests were the initial form of resistance that affirmed the political position of the pesantren against the presence of PT Mayora. Thousands of students and local residents were involved in taking to the streets, protesting in front of factories and local government offices. This action is not merely an overflow of collective emotions, but a form of political articulation based on values, namely ecological awareness and social justice. The demonstration was designed with a strong narrative, filled with local religious and cultural symbols that linked resistance to corporations with the defense of ancestral heritage lands and divine trust (Ross, 2022).

At the same time, the kiai took a diplomatic approach through political channels, trying to lobby members of the DPRD (Regional People's Representative Assembly) and local governments to conduct a review of the company's operational permits. This process shows the kiai's ability as an actor who is not only spiritually charismatic, but also has the ability to build power relations and play political diplomacy. In this case, political theology is a crucial tool of analysis. The role of the kiai can be seen as a form of articulation of religious power in the public sphere that has historically competed and at the same time dialogued with state power and capital (Asad, 2012).

The third strategy is media campaigns. In the digital era, pesantren are no longer limited to pulpits and taklim assemblies. Social media has become a new arena for da'wah as well as struggle. Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp Groups are used strategically to disseminate information about environmental damage, permit violations, and community suffering due to industry expansion (Åhman & Thorén, 2021). More than 200 uploads were produced during the conflict period, with content that was not only informative but also contained a powerful religious narrative: excerpts from Qur'anic verses, hadiths, and prayers associated with the protection of nature.

This phenomenon can be attributed to the hybrid resistance theory as proposed (Suriani et al., 2021), which is a combination of traditional practices and modern technology in social movements. Cultural-religious mobilization became the fourth form of the resistance strategy. Islamic boarding schools hold *istighathah* (prayer together), Islamic ecology-themed recitations, and joint prayers for the salvation of the earth. This activity has two main functions: first, internalizing the values of environmental protection as part of Islamic teachings; Second, strengthening spiritual solidarity among the community as the moral basis of collective resistance.

From the perspective of Islamic environmental theology (eco-theology), nature is seen as a verse of God, a divine creation that has intrinsic value and must be preserved (Nasr, 2021). Therefore, the destruction of the environment is understood as a form of spiritual iniquity. Pesantren, through this narrative, has succeeded in transforming environmental issues that are often considered technical and secular into part of the issue of faith and religious obligations. This expands the support base of the resistance and strengthens the moral legitimacy of the pesantren in the community.

Finally, Islamic boarding schools form strategic alliances with environmental groups, NGOs, and academics. This collaboration not only expands the network, but also strengthens the bargaining position of the pesantren in various advocacy and conflict mediation forums. New social movement theory *(New Social Movement Theory)*, as developed (Melucci, 2024), emphasizing the importance of cross-sector alliances in creating effective and sustainable social movements. In this context, pesantren do not stand alone as religious institutions, but become part of a broader socio-ecological movement.

With a political theology approach, this conflict can be read as a battle between two types of authority: moral-religious authority represented by Islamic boarding schools and legal-formal authority represented by the state and corporations (Rasmusson, 2025). In many cases, including in Banten, the moral legitimacy of pesantren has proven to be stronger in the eyes of the public than the legal legitimacy of the company. This shows that in a society with a strong religious base, spiritual power can be a real and effective political force.

In addition, the resistance of the pesantren reflects what is called the "people's ecology," which is a form of community resistance to the exploitation of natural resources by capitalist actors. This conflict is not just a battle over physical space, but also over the meaning and value contained in land, water, and air (Clarke, 2022). Thus, the resistance carried out by Islamic boarding schools is a form of struggle for the right to redefine the future of the community based on Islamic values and local wisdom.

Furthermore, in the identity politics landscape, pesantren build a collective identity narrative that rejects the penetration of capital and development projects that are not in favor of the people (Rahman, 2020). Identity as a religious community and guardian of local cultural heritage is actively articulated in every protest, social media content, and political diplomacy forum. This identity is not something static, but is formed and strengthened in the process of struggle. In this case, pesantren is not only an agent of resistance, but also a producer of meaning. They recreate the meaning of development, the meaning of progress, and the meaning of prosperity from the perspective of Islam and local traditions (Basri, 2022). This is a form of epistemological resistance to the hegemony of development discourse, which is often top-down and ignores the interests of local communities.

The success of pesantren in organizing resistance to PT Mayora shows the institutional and cultural capacity of traditional religious institutions in responding to contemporary social dynamics. They not only survive in the face of the changing times, but are also able to influence the direction of change itself. This resistance is not just an effort to defend the land or the environment, but is part of a broader struggle to defend the dignity, identity, and future of communities based on the values they hold (Samper & Krause, 2024).

Media as an Arena for Ideological Battles

In the context of the resistance of Salafi Islamic boarding schools to PT Mayora's investment in Banten, the media has not only functioned as a channel for the dissemination of information, but has transformed into a complex ideological battle arena. This battle is not solely taking place on an economic or environmental level, but rather reveals the depth of the conflict between two structurally colliding value systems: the logic of global capitalism represented by industrial expansion, and the conservatism of local religion and culture guarded by the pesantren community. Within the framework of political theology, as explained (Prowant, 2024), every political conflict is actually a battle between fundamental values, and in this context, pesantren plays the role of a theological-political agent that defends the boundaries of the community from the penetration of foreign values.

As explained (Barnett, 2019), the media in the digital age is no longer just a neutral communication space, but has become an instrument of symbolic domination that determines who can access the space of representation, who is given the legitimacy to speak, and who is constructed as the 'other'. In this ideological battle, Salafi Islamic boarding schools use the media as a means to redefine the meaning of development, question the legitimacy of the state in making concessions to corporations, and reaffirm spiritual and ecological values as the basis of resistance. This process shows what is called (Fraser, 2014) as "counterpublics"—marginal groups that create alternative discursive spaces to counter the hegemony of the dominant narrative.

However, the use of media by Islamic boarding schools is not without irony. This study found that there is a dynamic called (Haider & Sundin, 2022) as the "media paradox"—a phenomenon when groups that ideologically reject the global capitalist system rely on the products of capitalism itself (such as smartphones, social media apps, and digital infrastructure) to counter the penetration of capitalism's ideology and structure. This paradox is not only technical, but also ideological. In this case, the use of social media by Islamic boarding schools, including Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram, has become a very effective tool to disseminate narratives of resistance, documentation of environmental damage, and moral appeals wrapped in verses of the Qur'an and hadith.

It is important to note that the actors of the pesantren do not consider this a form of fatal ideological compromise. Instead, they understand the use of modern technology as part of an emergency strategy, as stated by one of the main speakers, KH. Fawaid (pseudonym): "We are aware that we use Facebook and WhatsApp, which are also part of the global capitalist system. But this is an emergency strategy. We use their tools against them, just as the Prophet Muhammad sometimes used the strategies of his opponents to uphold the truth." (Interview, April 23, 2022).

This statement contains deep theological reflections, as well as showing the synthesis between Salafiyah principles and contemporary communication strategies. In classical Islamic theology, the rules *"ad-dharurat tubīḥu al-maḥẓūrāt"* (emergency conditions allow for the prohibited) are often used to justify actions that are normatively not ideal, but justified in the context of an emergency for the sake of the benefit of the public (Mubarrak, 2019). In this context, the use of digital media by Islamic boarding schools is interpreted as an effort to save the ecosystem, maintain community sovereignty, and uphold *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* — the noble goals of Islamic law, one of which is to protect nature (*ḥifẓ al-bi'ah*).

The media strategy carried out by Islamic boarding schools is also inseparable from the approach of "resistance theology" that has developed in contemporary religious studies. Resistance theology combines the dimension of spirituality with political-critical awareness to confront structural injustices (Tanner, 2022). In this case, pesantren not only voice environmental issues as a technical problem, but as a theological mandate that has eschatological consequences. Environmental damage is not just a violation of the laws of the state, but a form of tyranny against Allah's creation, which will be held accountable in the hereafter. In traditional Islamic theology, nature is seen as *verse* or the signs of God, so to destroy them is to ignore the cosmic revelation that is supposed to be guarded (Nasr, 1996).

The strategy of spreading messages through social media by the Islamic boarding school network in Banten shows the sophistication of socio-religious organizations in utilizing digital technology. During the period of intensity of the conflict with PT Mayora, more than 200 uploads on

various digital platforms were circulated, which not only featured documentation of environmental damage, but also packaged narratives in religious, emotional, and political forms. Verses such as QS. Al-A'raf verse 56: *"And do not cause any damage on the earth after (Allah) has repaired it..."* It is used consistently as the basis for spiritual and moral arguments, as well as a form of symbolic authority claim to truth (Mustakim, 2017).

This phenomenon shows the existence of a "Hybrid resistance", that is, a resistance that not only relies on traditional forms such as istighatsah or *majelis ta'lim* (study group assembly), but also combines them with modern media as a tool of spiritual propaganda (Rijal, 2023). This kind of resistance rejects the dichotomy between traditionalism and modernity, and is more accurately read as a form of sustainability of local values within a contemporary framework.

Furthermore, the use of the media as an ideological field also shows a shift from the so-called mass self-communication—self-managed communications by individuals or groups using digital networks to shape public opinion outside the structure of mainstream media (Castells, 2019). This is very important, considering that the narrative of pesantren is often marginalized in conventional media coverage that tends to be pro-corporate or subject to the interests of capital owners. In this context, pesantren not only creates alternative content but also builds an independent discourse infrastructure.

The construction of the narrative of resistance through the media by Islamic boarding schools also has psychosocial effects on the local community. With narratives framed in the language of religion and ecological justice, it becomes easier for the surrounding community to empathize and engage in collective actions. This is in line with the theory of persuasive communication in social psychology, which emphasizes that messages framed in moral and spiritual values tend to have higher effectiveness than messages that are purely neutral or rational (Gass & Seiter, 2022).

Thus, the media in the context of the resistance of Salafi Islamic boarding schools to PT Mayora cannot be read solely as a tool, but as part of a discursive arena that produces and reproduces meaning, identity, and authority. This resistance shows how religious communities can articulate forms of political-ecological contestation through unconventional, yet highly effective means, creating what is referred to as "Ecotheology Media" where the environment, religion, and technology are intertwined in the same space of struggle (Rohimah & Hakim, 2021).

Social and Ecological Impacts of Resistance

The impact of this resistance is very significant on the ecological awareness of the community. A survey conducted by the Institute for Environmental Studies of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University (2022) shows that ecological awareness among the community around the Islamic boarding school increased by 37% after the resistance movement against PT Mayora (Susilawati et al., 2025). Although the construction of PT Mayora's plant continued with some modifications, this rejection succeeded in encouraging the company to adopt stricter environmental standards and a more comprehensive corporate social responsibility (CSR) program.

In addition, this resistance also strengthens solidarity between Islamic boarding schools and the community. Coordination between Islamic boarding schools, which was previously limited to religious activities, has now expanded to socio-ecological issues. The formation of the Banten Islamic Boarding School Communication Forum for Environmental Care (FKPPL) in 2018 as a direct result of this resistance shows how the conflict has given birth to a new organizational structure that focuses on pesantren-based environmental advocacy.

Salafiyah Islamic boarding schools serve as the "last cultural bastion" that preserves local religious teachings and traditions. calling this phenomenon "negotiated modernity"—where pesantren negotiate between maintaining tradition while facing the challenges of modernity (Susilawati et al., 2025). In the fight against PT Mayora, the Islamic boarding school not only fights environmental destruction but also maintains the local culture, which is an integral part of Banten society. In this case, Islamic boarding schools are agents of change that fight for the sustainability of the ecosystem and culture in the midst of the challenges of unsustainable modernization and industrialization.

Environmental conflicts in Indonesia are increasingly marked by the inclusion of cultural-religious dimensions, as in the case of pesantren resistance to PT Mayora. This shows that the

landscape of environmental conflict in Indonesia has shifted, from being more based on technical-scientific arguments, now increasingly involving cultural and religious discourse as the basis for legitimacy (Maarif, 2023).

Based on a comprehensive analysis of the dynamics of resistance of the Salafiyah Islamic Boarding School in Banten to PT Mayora's industrial expansion, this study produced a number of strategic recommendations that are not only relevant to the local context but also have important resonance in the global discourse on social justice and ecological sustainability. *First*, the government needs to strengthen the role of Islamic boarding schools in the formulation of environmental policies. With its proximity to grassroots communities and mastery of local wisdom, pesantren has the potential to become a central actor in sustainable development based on values and spirituality. *Second*, it is important to encourage alternative development models that are not trapped in the logic of exploitative capitalism, but are rooted in Islamic principles such as *hifzhul bi'ah* (environmental conservation) and local values that respect the balance of nature and human dignity. This model is not only feasible to be developed in Indonesia, but can also be a reference for Muslim-majority countries in building a new sustainable and inclusive development paradigm (Alibašić, 2024).

Third, the capacity of Islamic boarding schools in conducting media advocacy needs to be increased. In the era of information disruption, mastery of digital media, citizen journalism, and social media campaign strategies is an important instrument to build counter-narratives to the dominance of destructive development discourse. A structured media literacy program can empower pesantren to not only become consumers, but also become empowered and critical information producers. *Fourth*, the development of a multi-stakeholder dialogue space between Islamic boarding schools, the government, the private sector, and civil society is a necessity to formulate joint solutions to development and environmental conflicts. This deliberative practice can bridge differences of perspectives and build a policy ecosystem that is more responsive to local values and long-term sustainability (Supaat et al., 2024).

Furthermore, it is important to strengthen the epistemological basis of the pesantren environmental movement by integrating an ecological-theological curriculum. Idea *fiqh al-bi'ah* or Islamic environmental jurisprudence can strengthen the intellectual capacity of students in understanding and responding to ecological crises from a spiritual perspective (Amiruddin et al., 2024). *Sixth*, this research highlights the need for interdisciplinary research that bridges the study of religion, environmental anthropology, and political economy so that the understanding of the role of pesantren in socio-environmental movements is more complete and contextual. *Seventh*, the establishment of a national network between Islamic boarding schools for environmental advocacy, which can be named Islamic Boarding School Alliance for a Sustainable Environment (APLB), need to be encouraged to strengthen solidarity and exchange of experiences across regions. This network has the potential to expand internationally, becoming a forum for global collaboration between Islamic institutions that care about ecological justice issues and the climate crisis.

Finally, the revitalization of the concept Environmental endowments (*waqf al-bi'ah*) as an Islamic instrument in the equitable and sustainable management of natural resources is a key element of this recommendation (Ulum et al., 2025). In a global context, this concept can be a community-based conservation model that combines religious values, social responsibility, and ecological sustainability (Suriyankietkaew et al., 2022). Overall, this recommendation confirms that pesantren are not just moral fortresses or traditional educational institutions, but can also be pioneers of socio-ecological transformation. In a world that continues to face the threat of climate crisis and structural inequality, pesantren have strategic potential as spiritual-ecological actors that unite Islamic values with a global vision of justice and sustainability. Thus, this local experience is not only worthy of being documented, but also raised to the international stage as a model of resistance and hope.

Conclusion

Thus, it can be said that the resistance carried out by the Islamic boarding school in Banten is not only a response to ecological damage, but is a form of resistance that is multidimensional: spiritual, cultural, social, and political. This resistance shows a significant transformation of pesantren from

traditional educational institutions to social actors who play an active role in fighting for ecological justice and maintaining the cultural identity of the community.

Salafi Islamic boarding schools use a hybrid resistance strategy that combines religious practices such as *istighathah* and thematic recitation with digital media, mass mobilization, political diplomacy, and cross-sectoral alliances. In the midst of the dominance of global capitalism, pesantren appear as an alternative knowledge production space that questions the meaning of development, challenges the authority of the state and corporations, and offers a development model based on Islamic values and local wisdom.

In addition, this research contributes to the integration between political theology, political ecology, and media studies in understanding religious community-based resistance movements. This research expands the horizon of pesantren studies, which have been focused on aspects of education and morality, by raising the political-ecological dimension of pesantren as an actor of change. Conceptually, this study emphasizes the importance of seeing pesantren as a locus of ideological struggle that is able to shape alternative public discourse, as well as a model of relevant religious institutions in responding to global challenges such as environmental crises and development inequality.

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