

When things have to fall apart

Calling for Muslim Communities Empowerment

Bio

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Abstract

It is fair to say that the global society of the 21st century has been in deep crisis, spiritually, socially -- and latterly, environmentally. Most scientists hold that the catastrophic consequences of climate change are inevitable. This paper provides a conceptual framework for community empowerment in the *transition* towards a *degrowth* regime which at once synthesizes social, environmental and spiritual concerns. For that purpose, the paper provides comprehensive literature reviews of grass-root *relocalisation* movements in the developed world, thus, reveals the yawning gaps between community organizations in this part of the world and those in Muslim-majority societies, to effectively and humanely respond to the challenges. The literature review suggests key aspects of empowerment include communitarian empowerment and engagement, freedom of association, and an education that promotes social responsibility towards the environment through sustainability literacy, all of which are barely present in Muslim majority countries. In contrast, what has been standing in the way to the necessary empowerment in Muslim majority countries are the authoritarian legacies, the rise of nationalism, and the global counterterrorism project. The data of this research was collected through fieldwork on Indonesian Muslim groups - starting from the Nahdlatul Ulama's and Muhammadiyah's that are perceived to be the world's largest organizations. Data sources include interviews with leaders, observations, participatory observations, documents, and texts. Inarguably, the moral forces of Islam must be rediscovered, and major reforms in the relationship between state and religion are required given how widely accepted the secularization doctrine is in Indonesia. It is reasonable to assume that other nations with sizable Muslim populations like India and

others in Asia and Africa, whose political and economic environments are somewhat comparable to Indonesia's, could face the same predicament.

Keywords: *development, secularization, desecularization, community empowerment, relocalisation*

“If you’d been born 1,500 years ago in southern Europe, you’d have been convinced that the Roman empire would last forever. It had, after all, been around for 1,000 years. And yet, following a period of economic and military decline, it fell apart. By 476 CE it was gone. To the people living under the mighty empire, these events must have been unthinkable. Just as they must have been for those living through the collapse of the Pharaoh’s rule or Christendom or the *Ancien Régime*. We are just as deluded that our model of living in ‘countries’ is inevitable and eternal” (Bartlett, Jamie 2017)

1. Introduction

This paper should be considered as a direct continuation of the preceding paper, “*Prepare the Horses, the Apocalypse is Near: Eco-Alarmist Perspective on the Islamic World*” (Paper-1)¹. The following key points of contention have been laid out in the preceding paper:

1. The earth has limited natural resource stocks and energy flows. Therefore, endless economic growth and indefinite development are just unthinkable.
2. It, thus, follows that there is a contradiction between the pursuit of economic growth and ecological sustainability.
3. Consumer capitalist society is grossly unsustainable. The rich countries have been living in ways that are impossible for all to share, henceforth, developing countries - including the Islamic world – will not be able to follow the levels of consumption, resource use, and ecological impact of the rich countries.
4. The looming climate crisis and multitude of unprecedented ecological issues are the signs that the world has reached an ecological turning point. Henceforth, incisive climate change mitigation and adaptation policies are

¹ Paper-2: “When things have to fall apart. Calling for Muslim Communities Empowerment.”
Paper-3: “Capitalizing on religious lifeworlds. Highlights & Challenges of Faith-based Environmental Actions”.

needed, and the social changes required must be huge, radical and far reaching.

The preceding paper has alluded briefly to the notion of *transition* from the fossil-fuelled civilization to the low-carbon future. In this present paper, the discussion will continue with literature analysis of *degrowth* and *relocalization* movement. All these terms refer to an abstraction of moving away from the hegemonic global culture and fossil-fuels-dependence growth economy.

Literature of the *degrowth* movement largely draws a picture of radical transformational changes from the materialistic and hedonistic lifestyles into a simpler way in which everyone will live very frugally and self-sufficiently in economies that are mostly small and have highly localized, self-sufficient and cooperative ways under social control, rather than determined by market forces or profit. Nonetheless, prosperity and happiness continue to be sought after, albeit shifted from materiality to unworldliness. Accordingly, the discussion on spirituality, ethics, contentment, happiness and well-being came to the fore. Members of the movement generally share beliefs about what is wrong with modern society. Against the background of the utterly complex societal-environmental problems in the Global South, and poverty in no small part of the Islamic world in particular, I was considering these models to be practical and operable for the Muslim-majority societies. This movement, however, has so far barely received scholarly attention of Muslim intelligentsias.

Degrowth grassroots-up movement appears as a counterculture to the hegemonic global culture which has been shared by many worldwide including the Muslim-majority societies. As discussed earlier (Paper-1), the global culture in question is based on western ideals on consumption and attitudes towards the environment. In his critical analysis of the essential links between Development and the hegemonic global culture, anthropologist Thomas Reuter (2010) enunciates, “*Development is essentially a fairy tale we in the western world tell ourselves in order to whitewash what is all too often an export of our dysfunction and an extension of our greed to other countries, lest they remind us that it is possible to live by different principles.*” (p.28). With this in mind, it is my hope that introducing the *degrowth* ideas to the Islamic world

may create some kind of critical intercultural comparison and critical evaluation that would ideally be suited to create an opening for the kind of fundamental cultural change, which should gradually influence the course of concrete decision making in the direction of socially and environmentally-responsible future in Muslim majority societies.

For and Against “Development”

Collectively, this set of papers develop an understanding of the core contentions between two opposing factions. One is claiming - by pointing up the afore-mentioned points - that the global economy has already exceeded the sustainable carrying capacity of the planet; and the other, continues to uphold the prevailing attitudes towards economic growth and the pursuance of global Development agenda. The fantasy of technical fixes and policy expertise have led the public unaware of the magnitude of crisis that everyone is in fact facing. That is, in part, due to the fact that the conventional wisdom among scientists is that they must not frighten the public but rather must focus their gaze on technical solutions, like hybrid cars, biodegradable plastic, fluorescent light bulbs, and alternative energies. At the end, they realize that there is no possibility of technical fix strategies to cut resources use sufficiently to solve the problems while anything like capitalist-consumer society continues (Titchener 2022, Rifkin 2019, Corn 2019, Spratt and Dunlop 2018, Kunstler 2006). The preceding paper (Paper-1) also provides an insight into why the chasm between the two factions was so deep and unbridgeable, and why governments in the North and South are failing to take the transformational changes needed to avert the most disastrous consequences of the climate crisis. In a nutshell, they are: (i) the hegemonic global culture mentioned earlier; (ii) an ideological loyalty, specifically, nationalism and developmentalism of every hue; and (iii) the elites' intransigence.

Obviously, the elites are tied to their fortunes, ideology and loyalty, and hence, are unlikely to initiate revolutionary changes that threaten their wealth and power (Somma, 2009). It thus follows that radical changes should be sought only from outside the elite circles. Another key thing to remember, within the mechanisms that have brought about Development in the Global South, those who wanted to keep the growth

economy and resist the *degrowth* transformation are: the Southerner elites, transnational corporations, and those who consume the Global South's raw materials (Author 2023). Apparently, the rich nations work hard to entrench and maintain their empires using coercive aid contributions, trade power, structural adjustment packages, and whenever necessary, military force (see Miller 2010). Under these circumstances, societal change theorists and community builders argue that a *degrowth* economy will never be introduced from the 'top-down', but must be built from the grassroots up, without reliance on state support (Alexander 2012). It needs highlighting that *degrowth* does not equate to mere elimination of the growth element from the present economy while leaving the rest more or less as it is. If growth is eliminated then radically different ways of carrying out many fundamental processes will have to be found (Trainer 2011). The level of consumption, resource use, and ecological impacts of consumer-capitalist society is far too high to be sustained for long or extended to all people, thence, consumer-capitalist societies cannot be reformed or fixed, they have to be largely scraped and remade along quite different lines (Trainer 2011). It follows that, the fate of the planet depends on the future of the global grassroots up movement, "there is nothing more important for individuals to do now than to help the movement flourish" (Trainer 2006). The exponents of the *degrowth* movement pointed out that all good intentions and sophisticated analyses of global problems and solutions by academics, politicians, think tanks and concerned ordinary people mean nothing until and unless individual citizens take personal actions to change their lifestyles. Henceforth, the crucial task that must be performed is to have built impressive examples of *degrowth* regimes such as the "eco-villages" which will show that a workable and attractive alternative is available (Trainer 2000, 2006). The main tasks include developing existing towns and suburbs into participatory eco-villages.

2. Relocalization Movement in the Developed World

The preceding paper (Paper-1) discusses how governments around the world are failing to bring forth changes needed and engage their citizens on the role they can play to avert the most disastrous consequences of climate change. Weary of waiting for top-

down solutions, people in the developed world took the initiatives and launched transformative processes in their own neighbourhood, or in some kind of intentional communities, to lead the way towards what is conceived as revolutionary transformations (Henfrey et.al. 2017). A key feature of the movement in most places is the concept of shifting the society from the power of globalisation and centralisation. They often aim to achieve this by turning to the local economy, putting the means of production under social control instead of the market forces and profit, and having human-scale self-governance. Thus, the term 'relocalisation' is often used to describe a movement towards an opposite direction. The attempts have been experimented by activists who dare to challenge the assumptions underlying established systems. While the movement belongs to the long-tradition of grassroots and other environmental-social movements that have campaigned against environmentally and socially damaging practices, the advocates in general have arrived at the conclusion that 'it's too late for sustainability'. Accordingly, the only realistic response would be to adapt creatively to the global resource shortages, and thus, *transitioning* into the post-carbon world (Bailey et.al 2010; Barry 2012). The concept of *resilience* as a key human capacity to deal with uncertainties and vulnerability has become the central theme in *transition*, "just as we cannot eliminate vulnerability, *resilience* must be the capacity to withstand and recover from 'wounding' and 'harm' we cannot eliminate" (Barry 2012: 80). *Resilience* refers to the ability of a system, from individual people to whole economies, to hold together and maintain their ability to function in the face of change and shocks from the outside (Hopkins 2008). Thereafter, the word *resilience* is used as a replacement for the catchword 'sustainability', and 'less unsustainable' for 'sustainable' (Bailey et.al 2010; Barry 2012).

Although we cannot predict the future, science tells us that the future will have to conform to (i) the laws of nature, (ii) the restriction of small planet, (iii) the constraints of ecological systems, (iv) the availability of resources, and (v) the peculiarities of human individuals and human societies. There are three scenarios that have been mulled over about the impending socio-ecological events (Hopkins 2008:32):

Adaptation scenarios take for granted that technological innovation will solve everything.

Evolution scenarios require a certain evolution and a radical change of attitude, but it takes for granted that society will manage to preserve its coherence, although in a more localized form that consumes less energy.

Collapse scenarios are based on predictions the impact of climate change and energy crisis will inevitably result in fracturing and disintegrating, at once or gradually, society as we know it.

The “Adaptation” scenario has increasingly been casted aside for being very unlikely due to its reliance on a number of miracles on technological, social, political and economic realms. Even if one believes that nuclear power is the most appropriate green energy solution which is proven to be the safest of all energy sources - as senior ecologist James Lovelock (2004) once did, many experts maintain that transitioning to nuclear energy represents an even higher risk. This is particularly true in the Islamic world context, in the Middle East, for example, considering the uniqueness of the region whose drinking water relies heavily on desalination plants, thence, any nuclear accident in that environment amounts to a mass murder. On top of that, the region is rife with rivalries between countries, making nuclear power even more dangerous (Mahoozi 2022). With this in mind, the “Evolution” and “Collapse” scenarios are held to be more likely. At this point, it is worth noting that the “Evolution” and “Collapse” scenarios are no different, both demand radical changes. What would be needed to prepare the “Evolution” is tantamount to the changes needed to cope with the “Collapse” scenarios.

For some time now, the “Collapse” scenarios have been contemplated in the literature of environmental movement under the rubric of ‘peak oil’ and climate change, addressed to both, the permanent shortfall in oil supply due to exhausted reserves, or the potentially catastrophic climate events (e.g., Dawson 2013, 2006; Bailey, Hopkins and Wilson 2010; Leonard and Barry 2009; Hopkins 2008; Bang 2005; Jackson 2002; Jackson and Jackson 2002; Jackson and Svenson 2002). These literatures provide

insights into pragmatic and strategic issues involved in a *transition*, from the unsustainable present to the more sustainable forms of production, exchange, and consumption. The thinkers and activists of the movement hold a radical vision of a *degrowth* world where the overall energy and consumption is reduced and where economy is circular - a contradistinction to the economic growth paradigm that was held as the dominant model to date.

Transition Town Network (TT) was founded in 2008 by Rob Hopkins in UK. In 2019, there are estimated to be between 2,000-3,000 communities in over 50 countries involved in the TT *transition* initiatives (RTA 2019). Rather than campaigning against globalisation or in favour of a ‘globalisation from below’², the TT project is premised on the end of globalisation and the inevitability of environmentally induced socio-economic and political disorder. They see the time for seeing ‘globalisation as an invincible and unassailable behemoth, or localization as some kind of lifestyle choice, is over’ (Hopkins 2008:15) and ‘Small is Inevitable’ (Hopkins 2008:68). Interestingly, despite all these, they hold positive and up-lifting visions of a more friendly post-oil future and seek to demonstrate that a future with less oil could be preferable to the present (Hopkins 2008:53). Along similar lines, Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) was founded in 1991 by Hildur and Ross Jackson. It is a global association of ecovillages. They are people and communities who try to live in a “human-scale, full-featured settlement in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world in a way that is supportive of healthy human development, with multiple centres of initiative, and can be successfully continued into the indefinite future” (Gilman 1991). In 2022, GEN connected approximately 10,000 communities and related projects in 116 countries (GEN 2022). Essentially, the holistic approach taken by TT and GEN are dissimilar to conventional

² A contrast to ‘globalisation from above’ in the debate on globalization that environmentalists and poor people’s movement in the Third World and their supporters around the globe identified as a source of innumerable problems. ‘Globalisation from below’ is rooted in solidarity among people and groups who recognize their diversity but who nonetheless grasp their common interests. It can only succeed to the extent that the diverse elements that make it up are able to incorporate one another’s needs and concerns while holding their own more xenophobic impulses in check.

environmentalism, or, “the exhausted, co-opted and compromised connotations of orthodox UN’s Sustainable Development”, or “the naïve techno-optimism”, or, “ecological modernization”, or “the green version of business as usual” (Barry 2012; Bailey et.al 2010). Apropos of the Islamic world context, the significance of ‘like-mindedness’ and ‘radicality’ in such an arduous undertaking needs reiterating. Trainer and Hopkins pronounce it decidedly clear (Cara 2021, Trainer 2011, Alexander 2012).

For and Against “Relocalisation”

This paper provides an overview and appraisal of relocalisation that obviously bespeaks a decentralist stance in political ecology. The decentralists largely hold that the more severe the problem the more difficult it would be for a centralist and authoritarian group to manage. The debates between Ted Trainer “Simpler Way”, Takis Fotopoulos “Inclusive Democracy” and Mary Garden “Leaving Utopia” are relevant to the ILN conference theme on “Democracy”.

The most debated areas about relocalisation ideas are i) the bottom-up approach as opposed to top-down dominant paradigm; and ii) the exclusive approach contrasted with the inclusiveness of open society. Trainer’s decentralist “Simpler Way” can only be understood by ‘limits to growth’ analysis (see Paper-1). He rejects the underlying growth paradigm that traditionally shaped both capitalist and socialist economics, and advocates a radically low-consumption, anarchist answer to the question of social and economic transformation. At the same time, Trainer rejects the conventional Marxist strategy of taking control of the state. For him, in a world of very limited resources it will not be possible for big centralized or authoritarian governments to run things satisfactorily. The state, no matter how powerful or ruthless or benign, simply can’t make ‘ecovillages’ work. They will not work unless there is widespread eagerness to cooperate and live simply and self-sufficiently (Trainer 2000). While favouring renewable energy, Trainer (2007) criticizes the general assumption that renewable energy can replace oil to sustain consumer societies, and that the advancement of technology can sustain the growth paradigm.

“Inclusive Democracy” theorist, Takis Fotopoulos (2006), critiques Trainer’s “Simpler Way” from a political point of view. He argues that political movement is needed more than simply bottom-up community self-initiated actions. For him, only if present anti-systemic activities prefiguring the system become an integral part of an anti-systemic movement, could they be part of a solution to the critical problem, rather than the problem itself. According to Fotopoulos, the reason that Trainer adopts a “Simpler Way” scenario is because for him the greatest problem is scarcity, not democracy and power, whereas for the Inclusive Democracy (ID) viewpoint, the sustainability and scarcity problem could be solved somehow by the elites if they reach a complete cul-de-sac through the introduction of any kind of authoritarian or even fascist measures and restrictions deemed necessary at the moment of crisis. So, the real issue is not the problem of scarcity or sustainability but, rather, at whose expense these problems are going to be solved: are they going to be resolved at the expense of the elites and privileged social classes, or at the expense of the working classes and the weaker elements of society. The issue is, therefore, whether or not people will establish institutions securing the equal distribution of political, economic and social power which can then create the institutional preconditions, as well as the cultural preconditions for ecological democracy. For Fotopoulos this is far more likely than Trainer’s “eco-rosy” scenario according to which people would quickly realize that the old system can no longer provide for them, forcing them to turn to local economic development, as governments would no longer be able or willing to run things for them, and leading, therefore to the emergence of local systems. He also critiques the “Simpler Way” and ecovillage model, which suggest that individuals could work here and now the transformation through small local groups, and assuming by doing that will take more control over their local economies. He asserts, nothing will change without fighting against capitalism. Even though the “Simpler Way” is death for capitalism, the premise that they will defeat it by ignoring it to death, by turning away from it and building those many bits of the alternative that they could easily build right now, for Fotopoulos, is outright false. Again, he asserts that assumptions should not be made that the process could be completed without a fight against capitalism, simply by ignoring it!

In a similar vein, Mary Garden (2006) argues that the GEN ecovillage movement does little to directly address ecological or environmental crises because it does not lobby governments or try to change the actions of corporations. Both Garden and Fotopoulos concurred that the relationship of society to the economy and polity was completely ignored by GEN, and the capitalist market economy and ‘representative’ democracy were taken for granted. Garden reminded us that an eco-village situated within the borders of the US or Italy is not sovereign; its precondition of existence is the existence of the American or the Italian state and all that it entails. There is no escape in this way; the structure must be altered or nothing else matters (Garden 2006:5).

Responses to the Critics

In response to the shortcomings of the relocalisation model, I developed “Green Caliphate” (Author 2023). Ted Trainer’s responses to the critics are as follows.

Trainer argues that the creation of eco-villages is neither about salvation nor the proponents are escapists who fled from the rat race. Rather, they are made up of people coming together with the right vision to form a new society or gradually converting the existing communities towards sustainable communities (Trainer 2000, 2006). Trainer acknowledges though, the greatest challenge is not with rural intentional communities where most impressive examples of ecovillages are at present, but with converting existing settlements in dying country towns and the suburbs of big cities. Hence, the crucial task is to convert them into highly self-sufficient cooperative local economies which are largely self-sufficient. They need to learn to draw the resources from local gardens and restored forests (Trainer 2006). Trainer recognizes the importance of political movement as well, but does not believe the existing movements are able to head in the required direction to manage to get to a sustainable and just world. He looks optimistically at small local groups that have already started taking more control over their local economies. Individuals’ role, according to Trainer (2006), is to lead and facilitate this through the formation of what he calls Community Development Cooperatives (CDC). Trainer (2006) points out that this is precisely his main difference with Fotopoulos who gives no help regarding the ways individuals might begin the

required political movement: this revolution is about radical change in culture into a worldview which willingly and happily energizes the new ways because these new ways cannot be forced or even given, but need to be searched creatively. Moreover, such revolution cannot be led by vanguard parties and there is no value in capturing state power. If the revolution was simply about replacing capitalist control of consumer society by socialist control, it could in principle be done from the top down quickly, and if necessary, ruthlessly. But the brutal, fundamental fact of coming severe scarcity means that this revolution cannot be like that. It means that the goal has to be largely autonomous, small communities managing their local economies and ecosystems well to enable frugal, cooperative and highly self-sufficient lifestyles. (Trainer 2006:3-4).

Trainer, in this respect, is in agreement with much of the rationales of my “Green Caliphate” (Author 2023), hence, emphasizing the significance of *endogenous* relocalisation movement by local Muslim communities, given that the revolution needed “can only be developed, worked out, learned by people where they live as they grope to local management of their particular local situations and conditions” (Trainer 2006:4).

3. Some notes for comparison and contemplation

Plainly, if the world has reached a turning point and that we have reached “the peak of everything” as Heinberg noted (2010), it is a due season for Muslim scholars to call time on adulation to the ‘superior’ west associated with ideals of progress, growth, and the unreflective acceptance to liberalism and rationality. Contrariwise, findings of this study in Indonesia show that Muslim societies need more thinkers who are fully cognizant of the nature of the modern world and the Enlightenment ideals of *progress* that have been pushed through the Development projects. The needed critical awareness has in no way been exercised by the Muslim intelligentsias. Economic progress continues to fit into the familiar narrative of ‘modern’, juxtaposed to anything ‘Islamic’ as pre-modern, backward, primitive, despotic, static, undemocratic, and rigid. The dominance of liberal Muslims scholars and their support of neoliberalism continue to reign. Having said that, it is relevant to note that much of the international community continues to laud Indonesian Muslims as among the most ‘moderate’ and ‘inclusive’ in the world (e.g., see

Eliraz 2018, Wahid Foundation 2016). The politics of Indonesia is touted as among the world's largest democracy (Davidson 2018)³, and was once modelled for post-Mubarak Egypt (Kassim 2011). Another key thing to remember, Aspinal (2010) and Blunt et.al. (2012) show that contemporary Indonesia remains a patronage society, and patronage remains systemic within the government. What is more, patronage plays an important role in the maintenance of the entrenched corruption.

From the project scoping fieldwork, I roughly identified two groups in Indonesian Muslim society, which many non-Indonesian colleagues commented to be in perfect correspondence with Muslim societies everywhere else. The two groups are, (i) 'community Muslims', those who are actively engaged in religious communities, organisations and activities, hence, having a stronger sense of community, and thereby, the *Ummah* might be their primary concern or focus; and (ii) 'non-community' Muslims, those who do not belong to any sort of religious community, and thereby the *Ummah* is nonessential. The latter group contains individuals who choose to live separate lives similar to the majority of the population in the Western world. They range from the mosque-goers who get together with other Muslims every once in a while, and whose males come at least once a week in the Friday prayer congregation; to the ones who no longer consider themselves a member of the *Ummah* altogether, although Islam might still be stated as their religious affiliation. An important finding from the qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation and ethnographies suggest that the 'community Muslims' have far more potential to engage in community-oriented initiatives like the TT and GEN compared to the 'non-community' Muslims. In the face of imminent crisis, my thesis argues for a political structure that would allow this group to take collective actions for their own survival and sustainability, and hence, promote the minimal (night watchman) state political philosophy for decentralist *resilience* movement based on local communities (Author 2023).

³ In Davidson's book review, Van Klinken (2019) provides notes to criticize the acclamation: "On closer inspection, though, Indonesian democracy is fraught with problems. The rule of law remains weak. Vote-buying is rampant and out in the open. In 2014 Indonesians very nearly elected a retired general as president who openly said democracy was un-Indonesian."

Fig.1
Indonesian Muslim Society

‘Community Muslims’				‘Non-Community Muslims’
Pesantren Communities		Organization-based Communities		
Fenced Pesantren Intentional Communities of like-minded Muslims Example: Hidayatullah An-Nadzir	Fenceless Pesantren Communities by spiritual leadership Example: NU-affiliated <i>pesantren</i> Sufi orders	Homegrown Organizations Communities of homegrown Muslim organizations Example: Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Muhammadiyah	Trans-national Organizations Communities of transnational Muslim organizations Example: Hizbut Thahir, Tablighi Jama’at, Muslim- Brotherhood Trans-national Sufi Orders linked to the Traditionalist Islam (read: fenceless <i>pesantren</i>).	1. Mosque-Goers, consisting of the yuppies, the working class, and the elites. 2. Nominal Muslims (‘KTP Muslims’), consisting of the yuppies, the working class, and the elites.
Traditionalist		Mixed Reformist–Traditionalist		
Muslim intelligentsias are distributed throughout the two groups				

As it might be clear already, the holistic approach of the relocalisation movement exemplified by TT and GEN does not seek a national scale of change. Rather, it comes close to ‘survivalism’ (Barry, 2012). It draws upon pragmatic strategies to “save as much as we can of civilization, and as many people as we can” (Barry, 2012:83). Nor does it strive for power in representative democracy, because no matter how powerful or ruthless or benign the state is, it simply cannot survive in the “Collapse” scenarios. Moreover, large countries may not survive as a nation in any meaningful sense – they will plausibly devolve into a set of autonomous regions (see Kunstler 2005). Thus, any political ideology for a nation-state will be rendered redundant.

For the purpose of discussion in the context of Muslim-majority societies, I need to highlight the following. Contrary to the ongoing trends presented in this paper, nationalist sentiment has ironically been renewed in present-day Indonesia, wherein

coercion against the Islamists gained more legitimacy (Fealy 2020a, 2020b). Counterterrorism propaganda was created to push the narrative which conflates conservative Muslims of any hue, including the *hijrah* followers⁴, anti-LGBTs, anti-*riba*⁵ movements - with *takfiri-Wahhabism*, in order to push an idea that any attempt to abandon less Islamic ways for a more Islamic way of life without legal opinion from the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) means nothing less than going against the genuine, indigenous, peaceful 'Indonesian-Islam', the 'Nusantara Islam' that the NU has been campaigning since 2015. Surely, the ruler was not slow in picking this soft spot for politicization:

According to Greg Fealy, NU has long seen itself as “under growing threat from ‘transnational’ and ‘fundamentalist’ forms of Islam, which it associates with Arabised and intolerant religious expression. This fear has led the Jokowi administration to take polarizing actions to repress Islamist groups (Warburton 2020)

On environmental concerns, drawing on my volunteer experience as an educator in both raising environmental consciousness among Indonesian Muslims and demonstrating the inherently ecological nature of Islam and the environmental worldview that Islam espouses, the modernist Muslim intelligentsias, the liberals in particular, are among the gravest barriers to the dissemination of *degrowth* and *transition* paradigms -- a remarkable contrast with what I found in the fieldworks on relocalisation communities in New Zealand that mostly attract hippies and liberalists, and where anti-authoritarianism thrives. The ‘westernized’ Indonesian Muslim elites are in good company with nationalist elites for upholding a positivist belief in science along with ‘naïve techno optimism’⁶ in a predilection toward *progress*. Overall, the dominant

⁴ For Hijrah movement in Indonesia, see <https://themuslim500.com/guest-contributions-2022/hijrah-movement-a-new-wave-of-islamic-piety-in-indonesia/> and <https://sr.sgpp.ac.id/post/hijrah-a-threat-to-state-unity>

⁵ For anti-riba movement in Indonesia see <https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/studia-islamika/article/view/11038>

⁶ See for instance, book by Hamid Basyaib (2021) and an interview with Luthfie Asyaukanie on a question of what Islam will look like in 2050 (Maula 2022). Basyaib and Asyaukanie is a co-founder of Liberal Islam Network (JIL—Jaringan Islam Liberal) with Ulil Abshar Abdallah.

paradigms that these intelligentsias continue to cling to are: nationalism; economic growth; capitalist-development ideology; market economy and consumerism.

In this respect, I concur with Pringle's portrayal of Indonesian Muslim. While Muslim is the majority of the population (87% in 2021) but Muslims who are 'not nationalist, nor secularist' and 'who vote for an Islamic political party', "*have always been a minority of the Indonesian population and remain so, despite the increase in Islamic religious observance in recent years*" (Pringle, 2010:11). Other scholars noted an anomaly, that the Indonesian Muslim community attitudes are typically those of a minority group (Wertheim, 1975; Schwarz, 1997). It is worth remembering the way nationalism foisted unity in diversity is tantamount to the state's oppression to national minorities: 'to change the master is not to be free', is a hard and fast rule of minorities in the Global South. Anarchist Rudolf Rocker describes lucidly in a 'prophetic' passage (in Dolgoff 1977: para 1):

"...the same nationalities which before World War I, never ceased to revolt against the foreign oppressor, reveal themselves today, when they have attained independence, as the worst oppressors of national minorities within their own jurisdiction and inflict upon them the same moral and legal oppressions, which when they were subjected peoples... this ought to make plain even to the blindest, that a harmonious living together within the framework of the national state is definitely impossible... These peoples who have in the name of liberation shaken off the yoke of the hated foreign rule have gained nothing thereby... in most cases they have taken on a new yoke which is frequently more oppressive than the old... ...the change of human groups into nations, that is, State peoples, have not opened out a new outlook... it is today one of the most dangerous hindrances to social liberation... behind everything, the term "National" stands for the will to power of privileged few and the special interests of caste and class..."

Against this background, what might be an important critique this paper makes to the studies of Islam and nationalism is the long-standing political stance of the traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) against the 'non-nationalist, non-secularist' Muslim groups. The NU is oftentimes regarded as the world's largest Muslim organisation. Also, claims to be the founder of the nation-state, and accordingly, a time-honoured bastion of 'national unity'. Many among the contemporary NU leaders received western

scholarship, including Ulil Abshar Abdallah who founded Liberal Islam Network (JIL) and Nadirsyah Hosen, a senior lecturer at the faculty of law, Monash University, Australia, also known as the chief “Ra’is Syuriah” of the NU Australia and New Zealand branch. Curiously enough, NU political aspiration has no slightest inkling towards the planetary emergency being discussed in this paper. NU’s rhetoric might be inspiring (e.g., R20 2022), but their actions have no-where near measured up to. The NU keeps up a political culture of cooperation and subservience despite missing the critical perspectives that are necessary to challenge the prevailing paradigms that underpin the whole Indonesian state structure. Remarkably, the NU head openly advocated for the oligarchs and the NU to form a mutually beneficial partnership (Peradaban 2023).

4. Discussion: The tasks ahead of Muslim intelligentsias

This set of papers have a pragmatic orientation. Along with the worldwide effort to combat climate change, waste crisis, and the environmental problems in general through transformational changes in all spheres of life, the paper aims at persuading Muslim intellectuals to mainstream the *degrowth*, *transition*, *relocalisation* and *resilience* paradigms in Muslim-majority societies. Still, there are a number of caveats that Muslim intelligentsias need to be cognizant about:

Faith matters

The study began with an argument that religion matters. We must never forget about the importance of religious communities as a failsafe for a wide range of trouble. Faith in God helps people to remain strong during troubled times. Religions are proven to have provided comfort and sense of security throughout the history of human civilization. Moreover, humans by nature are meaning-seeking creatures. We are motivated by both the need to understand the world in which we live, and the yearning to search for something of value and significance that makes life worth living in the midst of suffering

Having said that, it is worth remembering that faith can also lend itself well to complacency and feelings that need no change. Furthermore, the Islamic millenarian thought cannot be ignored, whereby the influence of utopian or apocalyptic expectations

might come into play in shaping the Muslim's response to the climate change emergency. Therein, I spotted the importance of integrating Islamic lifeworld and the traditional religious institutions to the global environmental governance in our attempts to adapt to the changing climate and the supervening consequences as discussed in the subsequent paper (Paper-3).

The significance of like-mindedness

Committing to radical green lifestyles would involve a lot of explaining, and the eco-living plan would surely disrupt the idea of life that many people have. While most people might be supportive, there are definitely many who would think that those who are committed to eco-living as being ridiculous or are extremely worried. The negativity would be frustrating. So, getting together with like-minded people who can relate to this frustration and who really understand each other's reasoning is a necessity. This implies the need to liberate Muslims to choose any social arrangements, a contrast to the re-strengthened nation-building enterprises in the Muslim-majority countries as demonstrated in the case study of Indonesia.

Go against the "unity of our nation"

The community-led initiatives like TT and GEN do not seek a nation-state-scale of changes. They seek a whole new way of creating a new society, an alternative society. 'Instead of doing battle with the 'ponderous dinosaur' of the old society with all its fault and wrongs, they would just go out and create a new one' (Bang 2005:32) -- what an obnoxious and frightening idea to the reigning nationalist's "unity of our nation"?

Introspection

Transition from an unsustainable present to more-sustainable future is uncertain and not automatic. It requires contribution from all, and requires in particular of each of us a critical examination of our individual lifestyles and values. This could be the hardest part.

Re-enchantment

This work offers some insights into the critiques of Weber's disenchantment or *entzauberung*, a grand sociological theory that Muslim scholars on Islamic studies have all too easily adopted as a theory with a normative authority. In doing so, this paper lends support to Seyyed Hossein Nasr's proposition to re-enchant the Islamic world (Nasr, 2001). Along this line, the paper shall make an original contribution to Muslim's reconstruction of knowledge project (Zaidi 2006, Author 2021), by providing empirical studies that substantiate the needs to decolonize knowledge from the hegemony of Western knowledge systems, and to rebuild the *Tawhidi* worldview as an integrative framework for science, faith, and ethics within the Islamic sensibility. These should constitute the tasks that Muslim academics must bear the responsibility for.

The significance of Lifeworld

This work reveals what has been hardly recognized in majority literature on environmental studies that beyond the scientist and environmentalist lifeworld, people in the Global South in general - the Muslim communities included - live in disparate lifeworlds, according to which the scientific statements about climate change and the scientifically derived solution are merely empty talks, lacking of communicative relations to their lifeworldly understanding. The Southerners live in non-scientific lifeworlds, giving sense and meaning to and receiving sense and meaning from those lifeworlds which are independent of scientific characteristics. The failure to recognize this gap, by my judgement, has accounted for the largest failure of the environmental movement in the Global South.

Religion and ecology

There is a large volume of published studies describing the role that the world religions - Islam included - can and should take in environmental movements. The empirical studies in this work raise questions about the generalisability of the assumptions in much of those works whenever it fails to incorporate the socially and politically stormy environment in the Global South in general, and the Muslim world in particular. Post-colonial theory perspectives are needed to throw light on the issues. The UN's Faith for

Earth initiatives in the subsequent paper (Paper-3) substantiates the need for a better strategy in capitalizing on Islamic lifeworld.

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