

## **Da'wah Qur'aniyah Based on Environmental Conversation: Revitalizing Spiritual Capital Ecotheology, Environmentally Friendly, Gender Responsive**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Religious theology was developed to build a movement to respond to environmental conservation based on Islam (eco-Islam). It is an effort to realize an integral awareness in instilling ethics, particularly in the perspective of da'wah based on environmental preservation, and has a vision of positive education in response to the current environmental crisis and problems. Consequently, this qualitative study employed documentation methods, using books, scientific journals, and websites for data collection. The content

analysis was used to capture the meaning and involved three stages; first, an inventory of texts relevant to various literature topics. The second stage was the process and context of understanding in observing the world of texts and writers with different socio-cultural and scientific backgrounds. At the same time, the third was analysis, involving the construction of text meanings by considering the context. The results show that 1) the principles of da'wah Qur'aniyah (da'wah in the Koran) as a value base in

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ecofriendly theology (ecothology) are, first, the essence of a believer in the belief that Allah is the first creator of the environment. Second, there are three pillars of faith in development: belief in the necessity, humans are creatures of development, and true development the sustainability. Third, caring for the environment is part of faith

2) Gender insight in conservation-based da'wah ecotheology specifies that every individual has a balance of feminine and masculine characters in them. 3) Proactive ecospirituality as the objectification of environmentally friendly da'wah is human behavior in interacting with the environment determined by theological and ideological awareness.

*Keywords:* Da'wah, ecotheology, gender-responsive, revitalization

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## INTRODUCTION

Environmental damage is getting worse, as human neglect, domination of nature, and irregular management make naturally growing elements, harmony, and objects turn into chaos, leading to disasters. For three decades, Indonesia's livelihood and economy have depended on natural resources, such as oil, coal, copper, gold, and tin, leaving giant holes for air and water pollution. Moreover, deforestation continues to occur in Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Maluku, and Papua (Mangunjaya, 2007).

The Indonesian National Board for Disaster Management recorded about 2,425 landslide disasters between 2011 and 2015 in various regions in Indonesia. Most of these disasters were found in Central Java,

West Java, East Java, West Sumatra, and East Kalimantan Provinces. Subsequently, they have resulted in 1,163 deaths, 112 missing people, 973 injuries, and around 48,191 displaced (The National Agency for Disaster Countermeasure/ Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana [BNPB], 2017). Furthermore, based on the disaster risk assessment by BNPB in 2015, the number of people exposed to flash flood risk, especially on Sumatra, Java, and Sulawesi Islands, exceeded 9 million people, and the value of exposed assets exceeded IDR 44 trillion (BNPB, 2017).

Meanwhile, the environmental portraits obtained yearly are increasingly generating concern. This increasing trend in cases continues, alongside regional policies for managing respective regions. According to data from the Indonesian Ministry of Environment in 2012, there were 300 environmental cases, including forest fires, pollution, law violations, and mining. In addition, there was a decrease in environmental quality in 2009, 2010, and 2011 by 59.79%, 61.7%, and 60.84%, respectively. It is reinforced by the latest data from the *Menuju Indonesia Hijau* (Towards a Green Indonesia) program, which stated that the country only has a 48.7% forest cover area (Pramesti, 2017).

Also, the feminist movement views environmental damage as directly proportional to women's exploitation cases and considers that they must be involved and promoted in saving nature. This movement is called ecofeminism and seeks to create and preserve nature and the environment based on femininity and women. According

to Shiva (1996), an ecofeminism leader from India, the development experienced by the third world birthed a myth that increasingly placed play a strategic role in promoting or creating a comfortable and beautiful natural environment.

Although gender activists have alternative perspectives for responding to various environmental damage issues through ecofeminism, religion has a different point of view. Hence, this study provides an alternative to mapping the development of religion, specifically the trend of its theology thinking. It uses the da'wah Qur'aniyah (da'wah in the Koran) perspective regarding environmental preservation to realize an integral awareness in instilling ethics and building a movement in response to Islamic-based environmental conservation (eco-Islam). This perspective has a vision of positive education responding to the current environmental crisis.

Based on the background description above, this study examines and answers the formulation of the problem as follows what the principles of proselytizing the Qur'aniyah as a value base in gender-responsive ecotheology are?

## METHOD

This qualitative study employed the hermeneutic approach, which is a systematic step in tracing textual data for future reflective studies. The reflection process comprised two steps, namely, seeing the facts (text) or the world of text and, at the same time, seeing the interpreter of these facts (the world of the author) (Rohman, 2013).

Data were collected through the documentation method, from books and scientific journals, and websites. Meanwhile, the content analysis procedure adopted from (Krippendorff, 2004) was used to capture the meaning as follows:

Figure 1 shows that the analysis process consisted of three stages. First, an inventory of texts relevant to topics from various literature; second, the contextual process of understanding in observing the world of texts and writers with various socio-cultural and scientific backgrounds. The third was analysis, involving the construction of meaning from the text by considering the context.

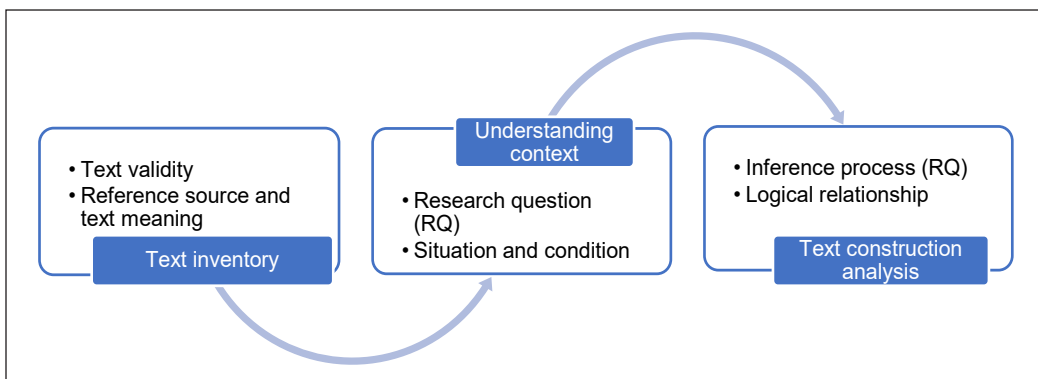


Figure 1. Procedure of the content analysis adopted from Krippendorff (2004)

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### **The Principles of Da'wah Qur'aniyah as the Value Base in Environmentally Friendly Theology**

The study of da'wah and environmental preservation recently started to emerge as a solution to various problems of the people, including environmental crisis. It has encouraged the development of Muslim intellectualism, alongside the essence of Islamic da'wah, often referred to as an effort to invite goodness or make changes from bad to good and better.

This da'wah essence widens the diversity of reflections on spiritual reality; hence the meaning needs to be emphasized in the theological context. Watling (2009) emphasized it as a study called "ecotopias," which describes religion towards nature and humans through the imagination of harmony, togetherness, independence, sacredness, and even connectedness of nature in the world' theological perspective.

The relationship between theological and natural ethics is known as ecotheology (Febriani, 2014). Their essence is human ethics to harmonize its relationship with the Creator, thereby establishing harmony among humans and other creatures. Based on this theological awareness, making people aware of God's existence as the Creator and realizing that the universe is also His creation is necessary (Mujiono, 2001).

Although the relationship between God, humans, and the universe is described as harmonious, it is not touched by human attention when reading the contained teaching texts. As a result, the actualization

of normative teachings regarding this relationship is not harmonious, as shown by the increasing research on spiritual, moral, and environmental crises, which are interrelated.

Most Muslims, in particular, are limited to ritualistic religious teachings, though the Qur'an and hadith contain guidelines for a better life. By applying the spirit of the Qur'an, which often instructs people to explore the harmonization of the relationship between God, nature, and humans, spiritual, social, and environmental crises in today's modern era will not exist. Hence, the source of this problem is the low harmony between humans and God, which results in the lack of harmony in relations between humans and nature. Therefore, exploring these theological ethics at the beginning of the study of environmental ethics described in the Qur'an is important.

In the development of theological concepts related to environmental crises, the ecotheology discipline was born. Although theology is a discipline whose purpose is to defend religious beliefs or faith with rational arguments acceptable to human reason, it is also bound by the environmental context (cosmos) and humans. Therefore, this study's theological discussion is limited to this understanding and not placed in the *kalam* science discourse (Islamic scholastic theology; Febriani, 2014). This discourse on environmental conservation arose due to the need for ecotheology to support ethical, theological, and philosophical arguments (Mudofir, 2009).

According to Mujiono (2001), there is an almost identical paradigm to the theology of environmental preservation by prioritizing

basic principles. These principles are, first, the essence of believers is the belief that Allah is the first creator, owner, and best caretaker of the environment, without Himself being owned. They also believe in the meta-social system, that humans are the most responsible creatures in preserving the ecological and spiritually religious environment. As an actual environmental preserver, a human's ecological niche is a divine mandate. Second, the three pillars of faith in development, namely belief in its necessity, humans are creatures of development, and essential development is sustainable. Third, caring for the environment is part of the faith; hence the lack of care about the environment means one's faith is imperfect. Fourth, destroying the environment is ecological kufr because that is the devil's behavior, making this act one of the major sins. Fifth, energy is limited; hence saving it is part of faith, and wasting is ecological kufr.

Therefore, Ecotheology is a form of constructive theology that discusses the interrelation between religion and nature, especially environmental issues. According to Febriani (2014), it departs from its original premise because of the relationship between human religious worldviews and environmental degradation. Ecotheology becomes an interesting discourse because it accommodates and unites human beings into a large biotic family that lives in one common heritage: the earth. It is an entity that promises and becomes a kind of religious spirit in the future (Gore, 1992). Ecotheology includes spiritual

dimensions, faith, worldview, ethics, morality, and religion. The combination of these disciplines determines the basis of a more comprehensive human understanding of one's place in the universe. It tends to demand moral novelty in the face of environmental crises (Chang, 2000; Wood, 1985).

In affirming the perspective of Islamic ecotheology, Al-Qardawi (2001) stated that maintaining the environment fosters a feeling of conviction among believers. The reason is that all creations worship and prostrate to Allah SWT in their way, which only He knows (The Holy Qur'an, 2021, 17:44).

Also, the commentators compiled by Febriani (2014) include Ibn Kathir, Tantawi Jauhari, al-Majlisi, Fakhr al-Razi, Sa'id Hawwa, and al-Biq'a'i, simultaneously interpret the word *tasbih* in this verse in a sense. The interpretation was that *tasbih* for humans is with the tongue, while for God's creatures other than humans, it is according to their circumstances, which humans cannot understand because of their limitations.

Another verse stated, "prostrate" everything that is in the heavens and on earth to Allah' (The Holy Qur'an, 2021, 55:6). Amrullah (2000) understood 'prostration for the universe' as the submission of God's creations to perform their respective functions according to His decrees. This submission is for humans to live in the world by taking its benefits wisely. For believers, various kinds of creatures in the heavens and on earth are signs of Allah's power (The

Holy Qur'an, 2021, 45:3), and studying them provides benefits and increases faith (The Holy Qur'an, 2021, 51:55).

According to the Qur'an, there are various kinds of wisdom behind the creation of the universe, including the intention of Allah to show humans His existence behind the various creations in the universe. Nature's submission to God's decrees involves consistently performing its functions, giving without the pretense of asking for anything back, the various beauties contained in it, and the regularity of motion and position. It also comprises the knowledge contained therein, which turns out to be intended for the benefit, support, and source of human life believed to be God's representative to maintain His various creatures in the world. However, the most important aspect is that the knowledge revealed will increase human faith in Allah SWT (The Holy Qur'an, 2021, 2:117, 3:47, 3:59, 6:73, 16:40).

The submission of the universe to Allah's decree, according to the Qur'an, makes a "Muslim" (Rohman, 2013; The Holy Qur'an, 2021, 3:83) and proves that the universe surrenders to the Creator. Nature and its contents worship by glorifying Allah (The Holy Qur'an, 2021, 57:1) and stick to His provisions to consistently execute their functions and provide benefits without ulterior motives (The Holy Qur'an, 2021, 40:68). It is different from humans, though the teachings of this sincerity and the performance of actions without ulterior motives, except for Allah, were also given to them.

Without any pretensions, except to obey Allah's decrees, the pure submission of nature denotes universal worship. Nature, in this case, is said to have better morals than humans who like to disobey Allah's decrees. Every teaching, including commands and prohibitions contained in the Qur'an and hadith, as well as the human ability to think and feel, makes them more aware of the wisdom behind Allah's decrees.

Humans are not the only spiritual beings with the potential to worship the Creator, as all His creatures in this universe worship without defection, disobedience, sincerity, and without pretensions (The Holy Qur'an, 2021, 16:49).

Nature is completely subject to the power and decree of Allah. However, the argument for the theological awareness echoed by the Qur'an does not always remind humans of their negligence in worshiping His word and increase the intensity of harmonious relationships with Him (Febriani, 2014). The Qur'an shows the greatness of Allah in humans and His other creatures, implying that the universe is a means for humans to realize the oneness of Allah, the Creator, and be rewarded for their actions.

According to Febriani (2014), the Qur'an understands nature to be a means to increase human theological awareness. It is because the Qur'an and the universe or cosmos have the same form. The Qur'an is a revelation that was sent down with various written symbols and collected words (the recorded Quran), while nature is a revelation in cosmic form (takwin). Nature is a book that contains "primordial revelations,"



hence “the Qur’an and nature,” in this case, is called the “holy book” of God (Nasr, 2004; Noer, 1999; Suwito, 2011).

Nur Arfiyah Febriani (2015), in her dissertation, revealed three gender identity cues found in the natural ecology, namely: 1) biological pairing, 2) feminine and masculine characteristics and qualities, and 3) pronouns/dhamir, which refers to male (*mudhakkar majazi*) and female (*mu’annath majazi*).

Theological awareness is also emphasized in the Qur’an by inspiring humans to desist from arrogance and always be aware of their limitations, as everyone, no matter how great they are, will surely experience death. At that time, Allah fulfilled His promises in the Qur’an to reward every human act of worship in this world, that those people will be his friends and witnesses in the hereafter (The Holy Qur’an, 2021, 2:82, 3:57).

Furthermore, Quraish Shihab (Shihab, 2005), when explaining the Surah Aljasiah, verse 22, regarding the argument of the necessity of the Day of Judgment, stated that two aspects need to be considered. First, Allah created this universe with *haqq* (truth), and in this life, humans will be extinct or have not reached the level of perfection with *haqq* that Allah wants and even coveted by them. However, other realms have achieved their perfect *haqq*. The second is the argument for the need to give recompense for the good and evil committed by humans. Many people do not find the reward for their actions, and some even obtain worldly pleasures as a result of their crimes, and vice versa. Therefore,

a certain time—other than in this life—is necessary for everyone to acquire a suitable and appropriate reward.

However, the Qur’an reminds humans of a life that will be full of pleasure in the hereafter, providing they implement its teachings while living in this world. A note still accompanies this statement that no matter how good human actions are, they will someday enter heaven not only because of their deeds but with Allah SWT’s grace. Subsequently, this statement aims to prevent humans from being arrogant and realize that the greatness of Allah SWT has been and will be bestowed on them in the hereafter.

Regarding the relationship between Islamic theology and the environment, Febriani (2014) emphasized that the awareness of monotheism will bring people to be *taqarrub* (closer) to Him. They will realize their limitations and acknowledge that life in this world is only temporary (mortal). There is the highest goal of the dynamic process of the world, which is eternal life in the hereafter. Therefore, this theological awareness positively impacts ecotheological awareness.

Jaoudi (1993), in another perspective, explained that monotheism is a belief in the unity of life. Maria used the term God-centered ecology, which begins with and believes in God. According to Christian mysticism and scientific traditions, a person without monotheism will lose his essence with the source of life (God) and His creatures. It can be seen when he is concerned about environmental issues but becomes weak and tired emotionally and

spiritually due to the lack of internal himself, named monotheism.

It implies that the harmonious relationship between humans and God the creator makes humans realize the nature of the universe and appreciate their existence as His creation. Subsequently, this has a positive effect through a reconstruction of their paradigm of nature, which, so far, tends to be anthropocentric to the theory by (Febriani, 2014), referred to as theocentric eco-humanism. This theory “distinguishes” the paradigm of environmental ethics in the Islamic perspective based on monotheism. It is also distinct from environmental ethics in other religions’ perspectives, which differ in faith and monotheism. Environmental ethics, from other religion’s point of view, usually uses the terms ‘deep ecology’ (Mudofir, 2009), ‘spiritual ecology’ (Abdillah, 2014), ‘ecological spirituality’ (Gullick, 1991), ‘greening religion’ (Warner), ‘green spirituality’ (Miskahuddin, 2019) or ‘environmental morals’ (Chang, 2000).

Based on this perspective, theocentric eco-humanism provides awareness to humans of the importance of reflecting on a harmonious relationship with themselves, others, all creatures in this universe, and Allah SWT.

### **Gender Insights in the Ecotheology of Qur’aniyah Da’wah Based on Environmental Conversation**

The presence of the Qur’an brings a friendly spirit to the universe, including human beings, both men and women (Mercy to

the worlds), in an egalitarian way. This egalitarian spirit leads people to optimize the potential of the mind or intellect and heart or emotion that God has bestowed upon them. The Qur’an does not view gender differences as two types of humans with more potential for reason and heart than the another. Instead, there are signs of balance in humans, making them have the same potential and opportunity to support their existence and realize achievements in their lives (Febriani, 2014).

It is contrary to the opinion of the biologist Unger, who mentioned that there is a distinction in potential due to differences in their biological factors. Women are considered emotional, while men are intellectual. As quoted from the opinion of Mary Wollstonecraft (1995), this stereotype is because women have been educated to be emotional beings rather than rational. Ironically, the distribution of potential imbalance is less favorable for women who have become entrenched. Like Unger’s version, it has resulted in them being judged as only worthy of playing domestic roles. It is coupled with a less objective understanding of most people that only understand the verses of the Qur’an and the Prophet’s hadith textually.

In these four decades, women have experienced gender inequality, causing men to be considered ambitious and authoritarian due to their intellectual potential. The relationship of this issue with ecological damage is often stated to be the culprit of the destruction of the natural order. Also, women have more potential to cure the disease’s symptoms on earth (Ismail, 2015).



Although the various clashes of the thoughts above have led to the discourse around ecology and its relationship to other scientific branches, where solutions to natural damage are being sought based on expertise, the answer is presented separately. Interestingly, gender activists gave rise to a new genre flow, named 'ecofeminism,' born out of concern for the issue of environmental damage, which they consider to be correlated with the discriminatory treatment experienced by women (Shihab, 2005). Febriani (2014) identified that the flow is divided into three groups, namely radical, liberal, and social ecofeminism, each of which has different tendencies.

However, according to Agarwal Bina (1992), the unity of the thoughts of ecofeminist figures from these various schools lie in the common opinion that the dominance of the male patriarchal culture over women and nature is parallel.

The above debates show that the relationship between women's domination and nature is based on ideology, which is the root of a system, values, and beliefs that place women and non-human beings in a hierarchy under men. It invites men and women to reconceptualize themselves and their relationship to fellow human beings and nature in a non-hierarchical way. Therefore, it is necessary to reconstruct this assumption, which is the root of human misunderstanding of religious texts that affect the pattern of their interaction with each other and nature. These two stereotypes for men and women are accusations that should be read and analyzed more carefully.

Examining Febriani's (2014) dissertation on gender-oriented ecology that the motivation of the Qur'an for male and female Muslims is to live in harmony and become active and progressive individuals is interesting. Both are described as individuals with feminine and masculine qualities or characters. Both have the same opportunity to attain achievements and success in this world and the hereafter with the balance of character and various potentials.

Febriani (2014) found signs in the Qur'an that humans are given the freedom to determine the character that represents them. Feminine and masculine characters have positive and negative sides, in which the latter is a stereotype for both groups. A good human being can balance positive feminine and masculine characters, as exemplified by the Prophet. Hence, the classification of these characters that have positive and negative values, according to the Qur'an (Al-Shabuni, 2001), can be observed as follows:

Figure 2 shows that each human being has a balance of feminine and masculine characteristics; by optimizing, they can learn to have a perfect personality and be well received in social relationships.

### **Proactive Ecospirituality as the Objectification of Environmentally Friendly Da'wah Qur'aniyah**

The theoretical perspective, which Febriani (2014) referred to as theological eco-humanism or environmental theology by Mujiono (2001), shows that the construction of Islamic theology has become spiritual

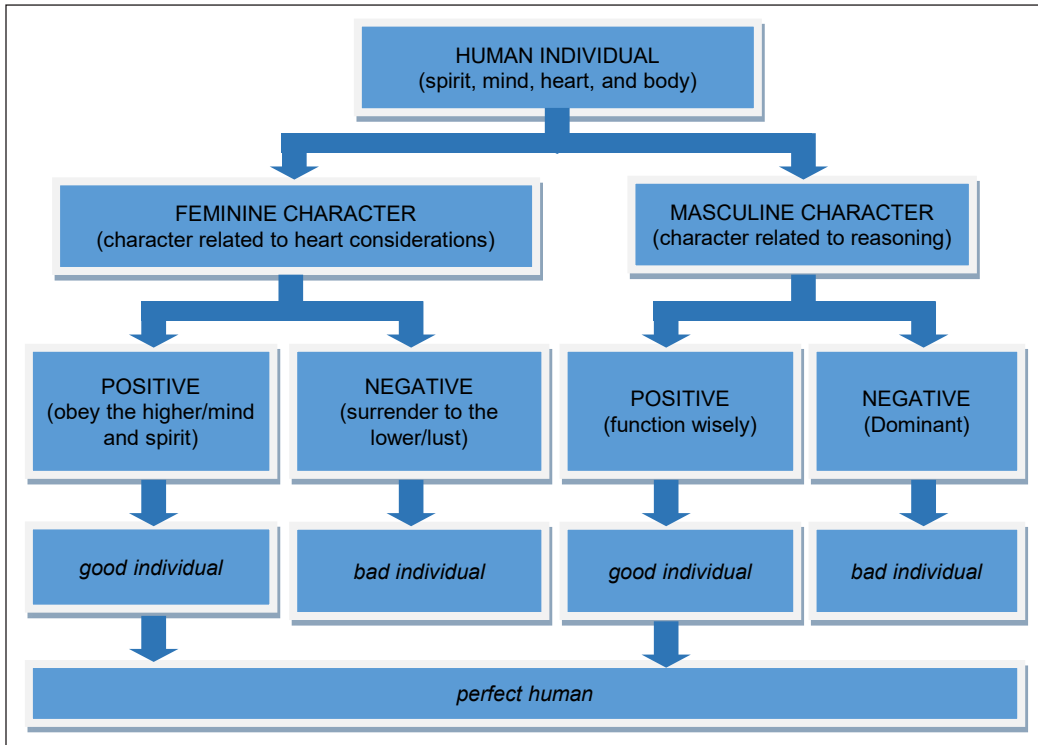


Figure 2. Feminine and masculine characters in humans (Febriani, 2014)

capital in overcoming various environmental crises recently. In this case, Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall (2005) asserted that spiritual capital is reflected in three fundamental human consciousnesses, (1) awareness of the purpose of life, including the creation of the universe. (2) Awareness of aspirations, including the people you aspire. (3) Awareness of their responsibilities and willingness to implement them in concrete actions.

These three awareness values in spiritual capital are found in various religions. Even more universally, Zohar and Marshall (2005) also asserted that the spiritual element in humans compels them to question their actions and seek fundamentally better

ways to perform. This spiritual element makes people want their lives and efforts to have meaning and is also part of the environmental theology path in Islam.

For environmental theology in Islam with various names to be accepted by human beings across all religions, an epistemological approach, which Kuntowijoyo referred to as the objectification of Islam, is needed (Shihab, 2005). This objectification, which emphasizes the importance of Islam as a science, is referred to as the science of Islam and is different from the Islamization of science.

Therefore, this study offers a new epistemology built from environmental theology in Islam. However, its

objectification is built through a new theory from research in interfaith societies field, referred to as the theory of “proactive ecospirituality.” This effort is explored from the ecospirituality phenomenon of Javanese women in the Simbar Wareh community, and around the Kendeng mountains, in Sukolilo, Pati. Meanwhile, the ecotheological theory or theological humanism described above is used as the theoretical framework.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the various human behaviors in interacting with their environment are determined by theological and ideological awareness. They will struggle in the market contestation of ideas scattered in social, cultural, symbolic, and spiritual capital.

Although the da'wah is full of inviting ethical and aesthetic values, its movement requires a proactive epistemology in Islam, which this research refers to as “proactive ecospirituality.” It is an effort to objectify friendly Islam to ensure the ecotheological buildings are more applied (applied theology).

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