



# Disrupting Countervailing Power: Reviewing Religious CSOs in Indonesia's Extractive Industry

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## A B S T R A C T

This study examines the shifting role of religious civil society organizations (CSOs), with a particular focus on Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, in relation to their acceptance of mining concession permits granted by the Indonesian government. Traditionally regarded as moral authorities and advocates of social justice, these organizations have long been positioned as countervailing powers to state and corporate interests, especially in issues of environmental sustainability and social-ecological justice. However, the decision to engage directly in the management of mining operations represents a significant departure from their historical role and raises important theoretical and practical questions as the gap of this research. The research employs a qualitative approach, combining systematic literature review with secondary data collection from scholarly works, policy documents, and media sources related to the involvement of CSOs in extractive industries. Findings suggest that while NU and Muhammadiyah maintain strong commitments to environmental advocacy and community empowerment, their transition into mining operators introduces potential conflicts of interest. This dual role risks weakening their credibility and legitimacy as faith-based CSOs, as public trust may erode when advocacy overlaps with profit-oriented activities. The study concludes that sustaining legitimacy needs careful collaboration with government and stakeholders, ensuring that religious CSOs continue to function as both guardians of ecological justice and critical counterbalances to state power.

## INTRODUCTION

This article aims to explore the extent to which literature on civil society and civil society organisations justifies the involvement of civil society as a business actor, particularly in the mining sector, which is often the target of criticism and advocacy by civil society organisations, especially religious civil society organizations.

Contemporary literature has begun to discuss the involvement of faith-based civil society organisations in climate change campaigns. In fact, in November 2023, an international forum for religious leaders and leaders who discussed climate change and the role of religion and religious organisations was held (Global Faith Leaders Summit- Interfaith Statement for COP28). This indicates the importance of the role of religious organisations in efforts to combat the climate crisis in the midst of climate crisis discourse in addition to economic and scientific approaches (faithcop28.com, 2023).

Religion and religious CSOs play an important role in addressing the climate crisis. Researchers and scientists believe in the ability of religious CSOs to drive the sustainability agenda. Religions can make a difference given their massive numbers of followers, their public visibility and credibility, and their impact on the worldviews, values, and lifestyles of their adherents. Moreover, the encyclical supported those who had long before its publication argued that religions would become 'greener' over time. Some researchers even suggested a 'Francis effect,' arguing that the encyclical would substantially increase the public concern about climate change. In addition, religious documents, such as Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, have provided

theological and moral support for environmental conservation efforts. Even before documents like these were published, many religious leaders and faith communities have long been pioneers in environmental advocacy. Some researchers refer to this phenomenon as the "Francis effect," referring to how the encyclical has raised public awareness about climate change and encouraged concrete actions from religious communities (Koehrsen, J., Blanc, J., & Huber, F, 2023).

Religious CSOs engage in activities related to climate change and sustainable development in several ways. First, they act as educators by spreading messages about the importance of protecting the environment through sermons, lectures and educational programs. These messages are often linked to religious teachings that emphasize human responsibility as stewards of nature (Tomalin, 2017). Second, religious CSOs serve as advocates pushing for pro-environmental policies at the local, national and global levels. They often partner with governments, NGOs and international organizations to influence the policy agenda. Third, religious CSOs engage in direct actions such as tree planting, river cleanups and waste reduction. These activities not only make a tangible environmental impact but also inspire people to follow their lead (Koehrsen, J., Blanc, J., & Huber, F, 2023).

Several studies show that religious CSOs act as environmental activists who come to the forefront by using the power of religious discourse to engage in narratives about climate change and sustainable development in various countries (Glaab & Fuchs, 2018; Kidwell, 2020; Koehrsen, 2020; Koehrsen et al., n.d., 2023; Wijnen, 2021; Martinez-Alier, 2023). The involvement of religious CSOs as mining operators in Indonesia tends to harm

religious environmentalists in pushing their agenda. This is because there is an ethical conflict with the independence of CSOs in carrying out their role as countervailing power to the state and the business sector. After all, religious CSOs will depend on the state to continue to be able to carry out mining concessions. This will have an impact on CS-state relations that change towards oligarchy. In addition, the development of horizontal conflicts caused by mining activities carried out by CSOs that face off against affected communities, which usually become *vis a vis* communities versus the state.

In the Indonesian context, religious CSOs are one of the civil society organisations closely related to the environmental movement, especially in advocating for communities experiencing environmental conflicts or agrarian conflicts that have to deal with the government. Nahdhatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah are two major CSOs involved in such advocacy activities. Smith (2018), in his article explains how environmental discourse is created with local communities and religious activists (Smith, 2018). Likewise, Wijzen (2021a) mentioned that to have a wider impact on solving environmental problems, the government needs to collaborate with NU and Muhammadiyah as the basis of religious organisations that are quite large in Indonesia. They have launched environmental programs involving millions of their members. These programs include education on climate change, waste management, and conservation of natural resources (Mulia, 2020).

With their moral and spiritual strength, religious CSOs are able to sensitize and deeply engage people's minds. They not only talk about environmental protection as a technical issue, but also as a moral and spiritual responsibility. This approach makes their messages easier for people to accept and internalize (Tomalin, 2017). Over time, more and more religious communities have become "greener," adopting sustainable practices in their daily lives and religious activities (Koehrsen, J., Blanc, J., & Huber, F, 2023).

As such, religious CSOs are not just partners in the effort to address the climate crisis, but leaders who inspire real change. Through education, advocacy, direct action and collaboration, they prove that religion can be a transformative force in creating a more sustainable world. However, when these two religious civil society groups expressed their opposition to state oppression in Wadas and Rempang, problems arose. Through Presidential Regulation 76 of 2024 on the Granting of WIUPK to business entities of mass organizations, the government openly granted mining concessions to religious organizations. The history of granting mining concessions in Indonesia shows that the mining sector is often a concern due to conflicts between economic interests and community rights.

A number of policies were created in the early 2000s to attract foreign investment, but they often ignored social and environmental impacts. Many local communities in mining areas experienced evictions as a result of this situation, and they lost their access to their natural resources. Not having to think twice, NU became one of the first religious civil society groups to be accepted into this new structure. NU made the decision to accept this mining concession due to the internal dynamics of the organization, which considered the economic prospects and the ability to support its social programs. Muhammadiyah followed suit, preceded by its own organizational dynamics. Muhammadiyah eventually did the same, despite debates about the ethics of involvement in this controversial sector. Meanwhile, the government granted mining licenses to other religious groups

in Indonesia, not just Islamic groups, on the grounds that irresponsible exploitation of natural resources could damage people's lives and the environment. This rejection indicates a greater dissatisfaction with the way the government is handling environmental and social issues, as well as a desire to maintain social-ecological justice for affected communities.

In response to the pressing challenges of the climate crisis, faith-based civil society organizations, such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, seek to play a significant role. Various studies explore the contributions of these two organizations in environmental advocacy and climate change campaigns, showing that they are more than just religious institutions

A study conducted by Adam Basirun in 2021 found that NU, through the Bahtsul Masail forum, issued facts that support environmental protection. This shows how NU plays an active role in educating its people about how the responsibility of protecting the environment is part of worship. This is an important step because it shows that religion and belief can be a bridge for positive change (Basirun, 2021).

On the other hand, Gatot Supangkat in his research in 2022 explained the various initiatives taken by Muhammadiyah in environmental conservation. In its programs that include tree planting and waste management, Muhammadiyah not only talks, but also acts. The research highlights the importance of their role in encouraging environmentally friendly policies at the local and national levels (Supangkat, 2022).

However, it is undeniable that involvement in mining policy brings its own challenges. Research by Koehrsen et al. (2023) highlighted the lack of environmental protection in government policies related to mining concessions, which often ignore social and environmental impacts (Koehrsen, J., Blanc, J., & Huber, F, 2023). In this context, both NU and Muhammadiyah need to consider very carefully the impact on local communities when venturing into this controversial sector.

Overall, these studies show that NU and Muhammadiyah are more than just religious organizations; they are important actors in creating awareness and action on the climate crisis. Through education, advocacy and collaboration, they prove that religion can be a transformative force in creating a more sustainable world.

The empirical practice of CSOs as mining actors occurs in several countries such as Bolivia, which grants mining rights management to indigenous people, resulting in horizontal conflicts between civil society (Salman, Carrillo and Soruco, 2015; De Boeck, 2011; Eichler, 2017). While CSOs in Ghana are working to defend indigenous peoples' economic rights in the management of small-scale mines that also cause conflict (Anab, Abazaami, Achanso, 2022; Balag'kutu, 2024). In Brazil, Motta's research (2023) showed the diverse attitudes of CSOs regarding mining activities and found that CSOs in Brazil have close ties with the state and thus tend to support mining policies and become implementers of these policies.

The main question of this research is to what extent the conceptual framework of CSOs, or the relationship between religion and the environment, justifies NU and Muhammadiyah's participation as mine managers rather than acting as a counterweight to state power when the state is experiencing many environmental injustices. In this case, the actors involved in this process include the government that allowed the mining concession, religious organizations such as Muhammadiyah and NU that allowed it, and civil society affected by the decision. In addition, other parties, such as mining companies and

environmental groups, are instrumental in creating stories and solutions to problems that arise as a result of natural resource exploitation. This shows how power, faith and environmental responsibility interact in social advocacy. Thus, this article's novelty rely on the gap of the empirical situation and theoretical terrain and how this phenomenon can be explained fairly and objectively.

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach by employing the theoretical review method. According to Paré et al. (Templier & Paré, 2015), a theoretical review draws upon existing conceptual and empirical studies to establish context, identify and describe relevant elements, and reorganise them into broader theoretical structures encompassing various concepts, constructs, or relationships. The primary aim of this method is to develop a conceptual framework or model that may include propositions or research hypotheses. In this research, it serves to synthesise variables that could be applied to the case of religious CSO involvement in mining governance. This research aims to explore a conceptual overview to map and analyse various relevant sources on religious civil society groups and environmental politics.

In this research, the data sources used include academic journals, books, non-governmental organisation reports, and media news related to Muhammadiyah and NU involvement in mining activities. In the literature research, keywords such as "religious CSO", "climate change", "Nahdhatul Ulama", "Muhammadiyah", "agrarian conflict", and "mining license", "sustainable development", and "ecological justice" were used to ensure that the data is comprehensive, searches were conducted in document repositories and academic databases. The literature gather from Scispace.com, google for media news and NGO report to narrow the data gathering process within 2020-2025.

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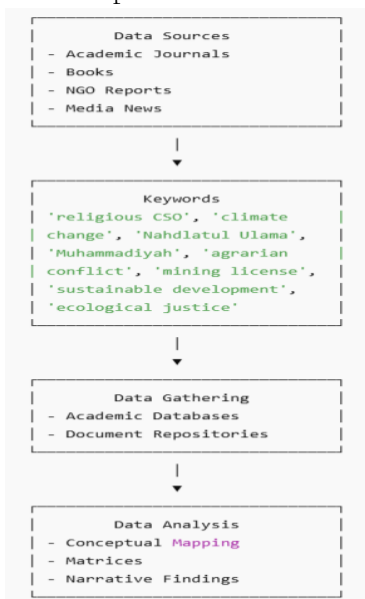


Figure 1. Flow of Research Action

The results of the analysis will be presented in the form of matrices and narratives that demonstrate the knowledge and

findings of the research. The findings are divided into sections that explore the main theme of religious civil society involvement in the extractive industry, which mentions ethical and practical dilemmas. The same patterns of the findings categorized based in the conceptual mapping for the final analys.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Empirical Practices of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah's Environmental Activities in Indonesia

The involvement of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah in environmental issues over the past two decades shows that religious CSOs can be strategic actors in guarding ecological justice and advocating for more democratic natural resource management. Through various instruments of struggle such as religious fatwas on the prohibition of environmental pollution, base organization initiatives such as the Nahdliyin Front for Natural Resources Sovereignty (FNKSDA), to judicial review of laws that do not favor environmental sovereignty, these two organizations have made religion a moral foundation as well as a political tool to protect the ecological interests of vulnerable communities. Initiatives such as the Muhammadiyah Green Cadre even mark the birth of a progressive ecological da'wah movement, expanding the field of advocacy towards dismantling destructive economic power structures. This proves that religious CSOs are not just appendages in environmental governance, but have the capacity as key actors in shaping the norms, discourses and practices of sustainable public policy.

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah play an active role in addressing mining-related environmental conflicts in Indonesia, their involvement not only as religious institutions, but as social actors fighting for environmental justice. One of the clearest examples is the conflict in Wadas, Central Java. The local community rejected mining activities approved by the government due to concerns about the impact on the environment and their daily lives. In this situation, NU and Muhammadiyah did not remain silent. They spoke out strongly to defend the community's rights, reminding the government to seriously consider the social and ecological impacts of mining licenses (Iqtamar, 2023).

Another case in Rempang, Riau Islands, where a mining project threatened community land. Here, the two organizations acted as advocates, encouraging dialog between the government and the community to find a more sustainable solution. In Kalimantan, where resource exploitation was also an issue that triggered resistance from the local community, NU and Muhammadiyah issued a statement strongly rejecting harmful activities without careful consideration (Muchor, 2023).

Nahdlatul Ulama also participates in Islamic law, forming laws based on *ijtihad*. In the 29th congress of Nahdlatul Ulama in Cipasung, Tasikmalaya in 1994, it was decided that pollution of the environment, whether air, water or land is haram and is an illegal act. The Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board discusses various matters such as the exploitation of natural resources by state companies and corporations that cause environmental damage. The PBNU started the National Movement for Forestry and the Environment (GNHLN) in 2007 and stipulated that the government and the people must act and behave in a real way to stop the destruction of forests, the environment and residential areas.

The Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board also pressures the government to impose sanctions on producers or industries that

do not manage packaging waste or waste from their production. In addition, it is permissible to boycott companies that do not carry out waste management either in bulk or individually. To address the issue of conflicts over natural resources such as land, water, and air, Nahdlatul Ulama congregants and cadres, or Nahdliyin, formed a platform called the Nahdliyin Front for Natural Resources Sovereignty (FNKSDA). It began with a discussion in Yogyakarta on July 4, 2013 with the theme "NU and Conflict over Natural Resources Governance." The result was a consensus to form an alliance with the aim of building a media or network forum for information dissemination and ease of organizing, as well as mainstreaming natural resource governance among Nahdlatul Ulama.

Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah in dealing with environmental pollution and damage initiated a legal review of environmental laws or regulations. It follows that mass Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah fulfil standing requirements by virtue of being NGOs. In 2012, Muhammadiyah (as first applicant) alongside nine other Islamic NGOs and thirty-two private citizens challenged the constitutionality of provisions in Law No. 22/2001 on Petroleum and Natural Gas (Migas Law) that, in their view, undermines the state's control over its natural resources. The description of these Islamic NGOs standing is arguably fascinating – while their motivations are religious in nature, their methods fit within the judicial review framework (Ramlan, 2019). In 2015, the Secretary of the Law and Human Rights Council of PP Muhammadiyah stated that Constitutional Jihad is Muhammadiyah's way of fighting laws through trials that will monitor and challenge laws that do not benefit the nation. The movement has successfully won lawsuits against laws related to natural resources that have an impact on the environment, such as Law No. 7/2004 on Water Resources and Law No. 22/2001 on Oil and Gas.

On December 14, 2018, the da'wah organization Muhammadiyah established Kader Hijau Muhammadiyah, a community that focuses on the environmental movement. The aim is to convey Muhammadiyah's da'wah based on the spirit of liberation, renewal and enlightenment in an effort to preserve and strive for environmental sustainability. This community is also a manifestation of the advocacy movement in various regions with environmental conflicts. On various occasions, Muhammadiyah Green Cadre Initiators voice ecological problems, especially those caused by corporate oligarchy in Indonesia and campaign to reduce access to capitalism products that damage the environment optimally.

Their involvement has significant theoretical consequences. In this way, NU and Muhammadiyah are helping to democratize the decision-making process on mining, giving greater voice to local communities and pushing for more inclusive and sustainable policies. They are also instrumental in emphasizing the need for policies that are not only economically beneficial, but also consider environmental impacts.

The legal basis for NU and Muhammadiyah's involvement is found in their Articles of Association and Bylaws, which emphasize social responsibility and community service. This shows that faith-based organizations can be a significant force in more equitable and sustainable natural resource management.

### **The Dilemma of Religious CSO Involvement in Mining Practices: Moral and Ethical Conflicts**

The Indonesian government is changing mining governance by involving religious CSOs through the granting of Special

Mining Business License Areas (WIUPK) on a priority basis. The WIUPK in question is an area that was previously included in the Coal Mining Concession Work Agreement (PKP2B). Government Regulation No. 25 of 2024 concerning Amendments to PP No. 96 of 2021 concerning the Implementation of Mineral and Coal Mining business activities (PP No.25 of 2024) and Presidential Regulation No. 76 of 2024 concerning amendments to Presidential Regulation No. 70 of 2023 concerning Land Allocation for Investment Arrangements (Presidential Regulation No. 76 of 2024), which provides opportunities for religious groups to manage mines through their business entities, this step was taken in an effort to improve community welfare, according to Ade Surya in *Involving Religious CSOs in Mine Management* (Surya, 2024).

There are changes in several articles such as Article 22 regarding the requirements for bidders for metal mineral and coal WIUP, Article 54 regarding the period of production operations and the addition of Article 83A which aims to improve the welfare of the community which allows pros and cons to arise in the community. Lack of experience and competence can lead to poor mining practices and weak supervision and regulation lead to unsustainable mining practices, according to Ismail Rumadan from the BRIN Legal Research Center (2024). Chairman of the Indonesian Mining Experts Association (Perhapi) Rizal Kasli considers that Ormas is included in the private sector that must meet the requirements, it cannot be given directly without an auction process. There are potential state losses and potential polemics and the possibility that a judicial review will be filed by the community regarding the PP. Prof. Dr. Supandi, S.T., M.T. National Institute of Technology Yogyakarta believes that the challenges of business entities owned by religious organizations must be able to follow the established mining governance, and the role of the government as a coach must be fair in assessing the activities of all government contractors. So that mining activities can provide prosperity for the community and minimal environmental disturbances (Saputra, 2024).

From the perspective of governance theory, this policy can be understood as part of the logic of "multi-level governance" (Koehrsen, 2023; Kidwell, 2020). Where non-state actors are given a functional role in resource management. However, it should be noted that such participation is only effective when actors have adequate governance capacity. Meanwhile, Ahrens (2018) in his study on qualitative network analysis explained that CSO involvement in cross-sector policies such as mining requires strong policy networks as well as social legitimacy and technical capacity. In this context, Indonesian religious CSOs, which have been known to be strong in social advocacy, but lack experience in the extractive industry sector, risk being trapped in functional disorientation and horizontal conflicts with grassroots communities.

Most CSOs in Indonesia are engaged in advocacy and service with a focus on various issues, such as democracy, public policy, environment, disability, and women and children issues. In the 2021 National Research Priorities Research Report by the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), Indonesia's CSO Governance Index has an average score of 84.86, indicating that governance is quite good. However, there is still room for improvement, especially in terms of legal framework, accountability and equity. CSOs play an important role in encouraging communities to actively participate in national development. Through the various programs they offer, civil society groups support community empowerment. In addition,

CSOs step up campaigns to raise public awareness of issues occurring in their neighborhoods. In some of these roles, non-governmental organizations (CSOs) truly contribute to the significant strengthening of democracy in Indonesia. CSOs' good contribution to significant democracy is also supported by good quality institutional governance.

In contrast, CSOs continue to make significant efforts to improve democracy, despite some challenges. While many civil society groups have begun fundraising, almost half of them are dependent on donor funding sources, which is a major obstacle with multiple factors preventing smooth funding. An additional challenge is the decline in the quality of democracy as a result of restrictions on freedom of expression as well as the decline in the quality of democracy at the procedural level. In addition, CSOs in Indonesia are less consolidated in the face of networking challenges. Mining permits for religious organizations can be unsettling for communities within the mining area. It is an irony that the religious organizations to which the community belongs have switched to accepting these permits, while most people are against mining permits that exist in the environment to provide living space in the community. But religious organizations have a different response to this opportunity, the organization thinks that this opportunity is a form of state appreciation for the organization and can support the economy of religious organizations.

Exploitation has proven to be one of the biggest causes of damage to the environment, leading to Global Warming that can no longer be stopped. Of course, this needs to be addressed by shifting as quickly as possible to an environmentally friendly approach to technology. After legalization, additional requirements emerged. One of them is that religious organizations must own a majority stake in the business that manages the mine and conduct strict supervision to prevent misuse of natural resources. In this way, the government must ensure that mining activities do not damage the environment and operate in accordance with established sustainability principles.

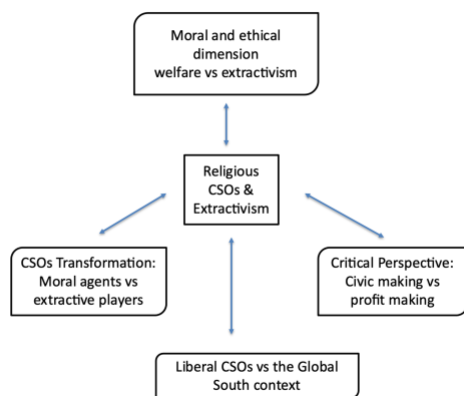


Figure 2. The Conceptual and Empirical Debate of Religious CSOs in Extractivism

Islamic law emphasizes that natural resources, which have a large content, are part of public ownership that should be managed by the state to ensure the common good. Religious organizations, which are structurally and functionally unequal to the government, have the potential to ignore the principles of justice and equitable distribution of wealth as stipulated in sharia (Lili, 2024).

Sharia economic law argues that the ownership of natural resources by non-state individuals or groups can lead to social injustice and exploitation to the detriment of the wider community. Although Law No. 25/2004 allows mass organizations to manage mines to promote economic empowerment, this practice still risks creating inequality and violating the principles of justice that underpin Islamic law. In addition, mining management by mass organizations may neglect environmental protection, which is considered a trust that must be maintained according to Islamic law.

This phenomenon is also raised in Elbra's Arc of Avoidance (2024), which explains that mining corporations often utilize legal loopholes and political discretion to avoid their social and fiscal obligations to society. In addition, if religious CSOs become mine operators, serious ethical and ecological conflicts will arise. As described by Koehrsen, Blanc & Huber (2023) in Religious Environmental Activism, there is an inherent contradiction between religious teachings on stewardship of nature and the destructive reality of conventional mining practices. In the Indonesian context, the legitimacy of religious CSOs is built on the basis of morality, spirituality, and siding with the weak. When this position turns into extractive economic actors, their moral position is questioned by the communities they represent.

In Role of Faith in Environmental Engagement (Avis, 2021), religious organizations should be moral guardians, not profit-oriented economic actors, especially if they ignore the principles of distributive justice and sustainability. Islamic scholarship has long engaged with themes central to environmental ethics, rooted in its historical contributions to the sciences, and continues to offer insights through law, theology, and philosophy that enrich contemporary comparative ethics and postcolonial critique (Gade, 2022). The involvement of religious CSOs in mining projects, if not accompanied by institutional reforms, monitoring mechanisms, and inclusive community involvement, will only reproduce new patterns of exclusion and ecological conflict. Instead of being a solution to economic inequality, this initiative has the potential to deepen ecological injustice and public distrust of religious institutions.

### The Potential Loss of Public Trust of religious CSOs

The involvement of religious CSOs in activities suspected of damaging the environment was not only recently triggered during the granting of mining licenses, but a series of environmental conflict cases have occurred before. A Catholic foundation in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), South Central Timor District reportedly displaced farmers' land for a plantation project in 2022. Residents claimed they were not involved in the planning process, although the church claimed the project aimed to improve welfare. Protests led to a temporary postponement of the project (kompas.com, 2024). In January 2025, there was a case of eviction of hundreds of houses of indigenous people of Soge Natarmage and Goban Runut-Tana in Nangahale Village, Talibura Sub-district, Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) by PT Christ Raja Maumere. This eviction is the aftermath of years of land conflict between the community and the company owned by the Diocese of Maumere, this eviction is a cleaning process because the company has the right to manage the land into the coconut plantation business sector. This is unfortunate because the principle of business in the church should remain within the framework of supporting the spirit of the church as a religious institution that upholds justice, social welfare, solidarity, human dignity and the integrity of God's creation, this

was conveyed by Father Marten Jenarut from KWI. There is an administrative defect in the HGU Decree Number 01/BPN.53/7/2023 concerning the Renewal of PT Krisrama's HGU in Nangahale, so the community filed an objection to the Ministry of ATR/BPN (BBC, 2025).

An environmental activist from NTT named Aleta Baun strongly condemned the involvement of religious organizations in mining. Aleta Baun emphasized that religious institutions should be the protectors of nature, not destroy it through resource exploitation. Jakarta Archbishop Ignatius Cardinal Suharyo Hardjoatmodjo stated that the Indonesian Bishops Conference (KWI) will not apply for a Mining Business License. KWI does not use the opportunity because it is not KWI's territory to look for crops and others (kompas.com, 2024). Muhammad Zainul Majdi, Nahdlatul Wathan Diniyah Islamiah made a rejection, because *maashid sharia* or the objectives of *sharia* for the benefit of the people requested that humans protect nature from damage (Tempo.com, 2024).

As explained by Koehrsen, Blanc & Huber (2023), religious environmentalism is not linear and consistent, but rather fraught with internal tensions and contradictions - especially when religious institutions begin to cross spiritual boundaries into economic and political orientations. They refer to this condition as tensions in religious environmentalism, where theological norms such as justice, solidarity, and the integrity of creation become subordinate to the logic of the market and the logic of power. This principle is also reinforced in the Role of Faith in Environmental Engagement report (Avis, 2021) which emphasizes that the role of religion in environmental issues should be educative, advocative, and transformative-not exploitative.

Well-known concepts of the CSO role are being a service provider, advocate or campaigner, watchdog, building active citizenship and participating in global governance (Civicus, 2020). The involvement of religious CSOs in mining practices casts aspersions on the role of CSOs in environmental sustainability in particular. There will be many moral and ethical conflicts when religious CSOs are involved as mining players. In addition, the high conflict of interest will be a serious problem in religious CSOs. Mining activities that are known to be corrupt will be very detrimental to the position of religious CSOs. In addition, the lack of CSO accountability and the weak expertise of religious CSOs in the mining field will cause many serious problems in the community.

This occurs due to conceptual differences that fundamentally underlie the role of CSOs in the environment, especially mining. Religious CSOs should be actors that ensure sustainability and social-ecological justice can be accounted for by the government. When CSOs become mining players, who will the community turn to for advocacy assistance when ecological injustice occurs? Meanwhile, religious CSOs are politically locked by 'mining licences'. Without any government concessions or project facilitation, civil society has the potential to be co-opted by the government (Piotrowski, 2009).

This phenomenon also creates room for polarization within civil society itself. Piotrowski warns that the more organizations that enter the public policy arena without a consolidated vision, the greater the potential for horizontal conflict and social disintegration. In the context of religious CSOs, doctrinal differences and political affiliations will exacerbate disagreements in addressing ecological and mining issues. This is in accordance with the findings of Nicole Bolleyer (2024) in Civil

Society's Democratic Potential which emphasizes that differences in internal vision between CSOs and between CSOs and the community will weaken the effectiveness of democratization, especially if the orientation of the organization is more instrumental and opportunistic than responsive and normative. As outlined in Networks and the Politics of the Environment (Berardo et al., 2016), the structure of environmental advocacy networks relies heavily on the trust capital and moral integrity of non-state actors. When religious CSOs lose such integrity, they not only lose their position in environmental advocacy networks, but also break the bridge of trust with local communities.

The unavoidable problem is that the more organizations there are, the greater the likelihood of conflict and disagreement, making it more difficult to reach a common agreement. It is inevitable that encouraging religious CSOs to develop agreement as a shared vision in the face of differences will be very difficult to achieve. Polarization will further create dissent and conflict space that is difficult to use in the interest of the nation.

However, this phenomenon lead scholars to look beyond what is expected ideally or conceptually happen in political realm. While CSO, particularly in this case is religious CSO, facing many challenges from state but they remain stable and organize themselves in a strong bargaining position. This phenomenon can be seen from other perspective such as political citizenship from Nancy Fraser (Hiarej and Stoke, 2017) who sees the citizens try to gain power for welfare distribution while maintaining recognition from the state.

## CONCLUSION

There is a disorientation of functions and a threat to the moral legitimacy they have been building when the state begins to shift the role of religious CSOs from environmental advocates to extractive industry operators through the WIUPK scheme in PP No. 25 of 2024. The conflict between religious values and economic interests will create a crisis of representation, where the public no longer sees religious CSOs as protectors but as perpetrators of destruction. When CSOs are silenced by political and economic incentives, they lose their advocacy capacity and are trapped in horizontal conflict with the grassroots communities they have been assisting. Without strong accountability mechanisms and serious internal reforms, the involvement of religious CSOs in mining will only deepen social polarization, accelerate the ecological crisis, and erode public trust in religion as a transformative force in sustainable development.

In future, serious problems caused by mining exploration and the resulting ecological problems may cause people to lose trust in religious CSOs. When people lose their trust, CSOs also experience delegitimation. CSOs cannot be mediators and conflict resolution for the community. Instead, religious CSOs become the target of public discontent over environmental mismanagement caused by corrupt policies. However, this could be minimized by applying new model of mining governance that lead by religious CSO's by also seeing them as an active citizen in the political realm.

This study is limited to a theoretical review focused on PP No. 25 of 2024, without empirical fieldwork to capture diverse perspectives or broader state-CSO dynamics. Future research should incorporate case studies and comparative analyses—both within Indonesia and across countries—to examine how religious CSOs balance moral legitimacy, ecological advocacy,

and state economic agendas. Such inquiry would provide deeper insight into grassroots perceptions, ecological impacts, and strategies to strengthen accountability and reposition religion as a force for sustainable development and strong institution for democracy in Indonesia.

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### CRedit authorship contribution statement

**Mustabsyrotul Ummah Mustofa:** Conceptualization, methodology, investigation, formal analysis, writing – original draft, supervision, Validation, Visualization, and Editing. **Aryo Wicaksono Irianto:** Data curation, formal analysis, writing original draft. **Malfa Emiila Salsabila:** Data curation, formal analysis, writing original draft. **Nadhif Atthalah Hikmat:** Data curation, formal analysis, writing original draft.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

### Ethical Statement

As the study relied on previously published literature and available secondary data, it did not involve direct interaction with human participants in the collection of primary data. All sources were appropriately cited and acknowledged to ensure academic integrity and respect for intellectual property.

### Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

**Declaration of Generative AI Use/If no Generative AI was used, please remove this section.**

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used DeepL, and Grammarly to assist with language editing, improving grammar, clarity, readability, and the overall presentation of the manuscript. Chat gpt was used to make table or visualization for methodology. The authors take full responsibility for the scientific content, originality, accuracy, and integrity of this article.

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