

Chapter 3

Surviving in the Globalized World Through Local Perspectives: *Pesantrens* and Sustainable Development

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Abstract There is a broad consensus on the principles of sustainable development, including what should be developed and what should be sustained. However, which dimensions should be prioritized remains under debate. One reason, among others, is the diversity of people's social fabric and their embedded ecosystems. After discussing how the concept of sustainable development evolved, including its goals, this chapter focusses its empirical investigation on the commitment of *pesantrens* (Indonesian traditional Islamic boarding schools) to sustainable development. Although they have their own attributes and local narratives, it is argued that *pesantrens* are undoubtedly strongly dedicated to such development as manifested in their social missions, particularly through their traditional education. Yet, the challenges they face, particularly their efforts in human development, are unquestionably huge. Entrenched globalized values, particularly modernism, have resulted in a disarrayed response. Surprisingly, however, with their various creative efforts, most have been able to maintain their existence and continue their social missions. This project compares three different *pesantrens* in Jember district in search of new insights regarding how each *pesantren*, as a traditional institution, finds its own way to keep its commitment to sustainable development. Finally, the lessons learned from this 'traditional' perspective will be refined to critically review the existing concept of sustainable development and thus to suggest conceptual contributions in the field. This project essentially comprises qualitative research wherein most data were extracted from various interviews.

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