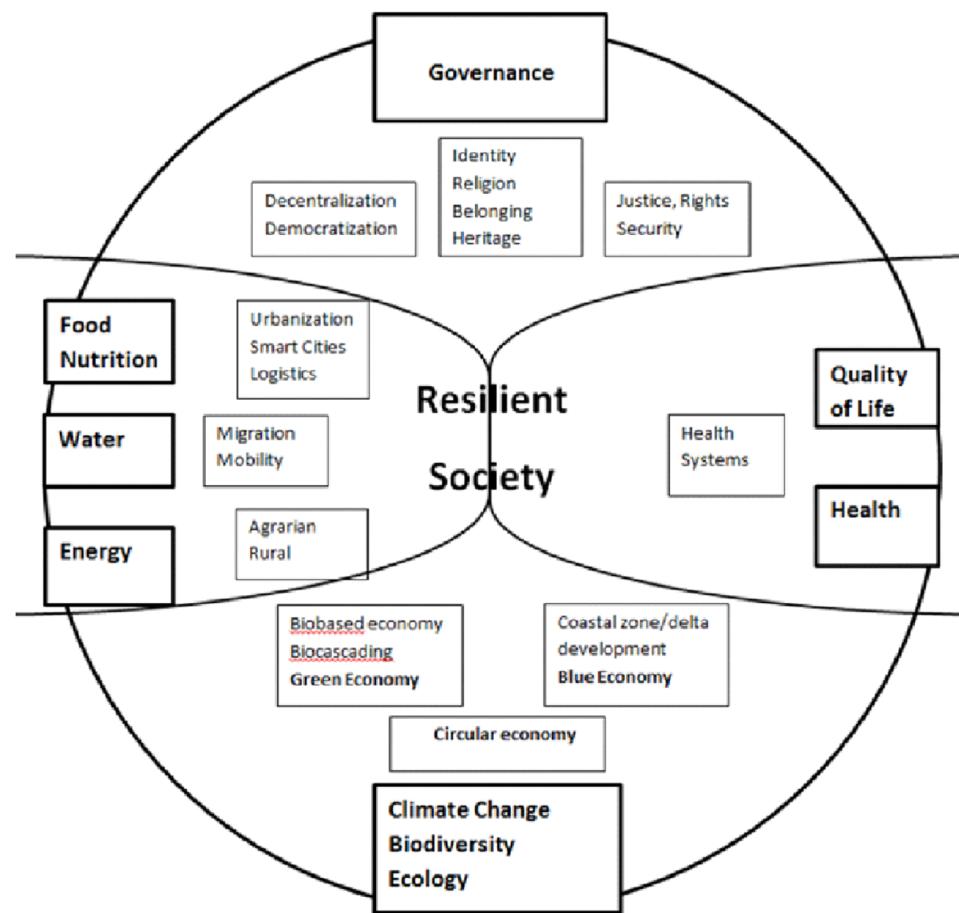


# What is the State of the Art of Discourse on Religion and Ecology?

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## Ecology and Religion in the Indonesian Science Agenda (RISTEKDIKTI)



## Religion and Ecology

Assumptions:

- The ecological crisis is primarily a behavioral problem (empirical)
- Faith-based organizations should be involved (normative)

Findings:

- All religions have norms about human behavior
- Governments want faith-based organizations to be involved (post-secularism)

What can scholars of religion contribute?

- Reflection on the realist understanding of nature
- Reflection on linear model of policy making



## Definition of the environmental ‘problem’

Ecological changes are not ‘problems’ by themselves but constructed as such

- Ecological issues have been discussed since 1970s (Club of Rome “Limits to Growth”)
- But the world is slow to act
- Because various stakeholders have various interpretations and interests

Even if we agree on facts, facts are interpreted from different cognitive frames:

- Scaled down: there is no problem (skeptics)
- Made big: beyond human control (pessimists)
- Conceptualized as manageable: ‘yes we can’ (optimists)

Thus, environmental problems are also problems of interpretation:

- We must analyze how problems are ‘framed’
- Scholars of religion are experts on interpretation.

## Managing the environmental ‘crisis’

### Policy making

- Is not simply defining and solving a problem
- But management of meaning-making and forming discourse coalitions

### Management of meaning-making:

- Environmental change is a problem caused by capitalism and economic growth (e.g. “back to nature”, “small is beautiful”), or:
- Environmental change is an opportunity for business and clean technologies (e.g. “zero waste”)

### Forming discourse coalitions:

- Part of the problem: various stake-holders have different interpretations and interests
- Part of the solution: influencing framing the debate: production, distribution and consumption

## What is the state of the art?

- Scholars say: ecological ‘crisis’ is not only technological or financial, but also behavioral
- Acknowledge the discursive nature of the ecological ‘crisis’; this is not to say that there is no crisis or that it is only ‘discursive’, but that it is also discursive
- Frame the debate not in term of ‘crisis’ or ‘problem’ but of a ‘challenge’ or ‘opportunity’; people are motivated by positive language (‘appreciative enquiry’)
- Analyze and interpret ‘problems’ in terms of their underlying ‘world-views’ (beliefs, convictions, assumptions); analyzing and interpreting ‘world-views’ is an expertise of scholars of religion
- Focus on ‘circular economy’ as formulated jointly by the Indonesian Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education and the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, in harmony with UN Sustainable Development Goals and the EU Societal Challenges