

Multiple Aspirational Contestation of Islamic Mass Organization in Indonesia: A Study of Local Muhammadiyah in Metropolitan Jakarta's Buffer City

Asep Suryana^{1*}

¹Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jakarta – Indonesia

Abstract

Despite its peripheral position amid the rapid growth of Depok, a buffer city of Jakarta, an Islamic organization, Muhammadiyah, can still develop and contest both at the grassroots and social-urban levels. This article employs a multiple aspirational contestation framework to analyze Muhammadiyah in Depok as a case study. The research utilizes qualitative methodology through in-depth interviews and observations involving the organization's members and administrators. The research findings demonstrate that Muhammadiyah in Depok can be categorized as either native- or migrant-patterned. The organizational structure of the movement is characterized by its grassroots level, the establishment of trans-local networks, and a vertical structure consisting of branches (organizing Muhammadiyah at the sub-district level) and regions (organizing Muhammadiyah at the city level). Consequently, Muhammadiyah has the capacity to organize itself within the locality and advocate for the socio-religious aspirations it upholds within the context of the dynamic urban-social milieu. The organization at such a local level also shows collective resilience and capacity to grow in the dynamic buffer city of Jakarta.

Meski berposisi pinggiran di tengah pesatnya pertumbuhan Depok sebagai kota penyangga Jakarta, organisasi Islam, Muhammadiyah, tetap dapat berkembang dan berkontestasi baik di tingkat akar rumput maupun di tingkat sosial-kekotaan. Artikel ini menganalisis fenomena Muhammadiyah lokal tersebut melalui pendekatan kontestasi aspirasional majemuk dengan Kota Depok sebagai studi kasus. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi kualitatif melalui teknik wawancara mendalam dan pengamatan yang melibatkan anggota dan pengurus organisasi. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Muhammadiyah di Depok dapat disimpulkan berpola orang asli atau berpola pendatang. Mereka mengorganisir diri di tingkat akar rumput, membentuk jaringan trans-lokal, dan terhimpun secara vertikal dalam bentuk cabang (pengorganisasian Muhammadiyah tingkat kecamatan) dan daerah (pengorganisasian Muhammadiyah tingkat kota). Maka, secara lokal Muhammadiyah memiliki kapasitas mengorganisir diri dan memperjuangkan aspirasi sosial-keagamaan yang mereka junjung tinggi di tengah dinamika kehidupan sosial masyarakat perkotaan. Organisasi ini pun memiliki daya lenting kolektif dan kapasitas untuk tumbuh di tengah dinamiknya kota penyangga Jakarta.

Keywords: Jakarta's buffer zone; local Muhammadiyah; multiple aspirational contestation

*Corresponding Author: Asep Suryana (asuryana@unj.ac.id), Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jl. Rawamangun Muka, Jakarta Timur, Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta 13220, Indonesia.

Introduction

The multiple aspirational contestation, as an analytical framework, asserts that socio-religious communities have an adaptive capacity to survive and thrive amid accelerating urbanization (Burchardt and Westendorp 2018; Chaplin 2025; Goh and van der Veer 2016; Jung and Veer 2016; van Veen and Oosterbaan 2025). Contrary to the classical thesis of secularization, socio-religious life is not eroded by urban modernity; rather, religion innovates to create new meanings in line with it (Aidulsyah 2023; Burchardt 2019b, 2019a; Hew 2024; Lang 2024). Goh and van der Veer (2016) concur that communities possess the collective capacity to construct new goals in response to social change and to organize themselves to pursue their socio-religious aspirations. Ontologically and epistemologically, the multiple aspirational contestation places religions in a positive assumption. This approach sees that the modes of urban modernity and urban religion have a mutually constitutive relationship (see Burchardt and Westendorp 2018; Lanz and Oosterbaan 2016).

Previous studies of religious contestation mechanisms tend to put Islam as a reactionary phenomenon (for example Fansuri 2023), whether rooted in Marxist/Neo-Marxist epistemology, post-colonialism, or religious pathology (AlSayyad 2013; Smaira and Gunning 2025). From a Marxist/Neo-Marxist perspective, Islam is often postulated as merely an instrument of the oppressed classes—the proletariat, laborers, and peasants—as a strategy for class struggle, in which its existence is not recognized as an integral part of urban society, but only as a reactionary political reality unequal to other urban realities (Yasih and Hadiz 2023). Meanwhile, post-colonial epistemology tends to reduce Islam as a “shield” for the subaltern to access economic-political resources, thereby

negating the inherent reality of Islam in urban social life (Bayat 2007; Rakhmani and Utomo 2023). In contrast to the pessimistic views above, the phenomenon in the Jakarta buffer zone shows that religious aspirations are not passive but actively contesting to fill the empty spaces of contemporary Indonesian urban life (Aidulsyah 2023; Hew 2024; Lang 2024; Rakow 2025). This article places the roles of an Islamic mass organization, Muhammadiyah, in the Jakarta buffer zone, Depok City, within the multiple aspirational contestation framework. Muhammadiyah Depok is a 72-year-old socio-religious organization (1953-2025) that grew from a grassroots association and has survived Depok's massive transformation from a suburban area to a metropolitan buffer city.

From the point of view of the latest Muhammadiyah literature, the multiple aspirational contestation is in line with the civil Islam perspective. It posits that Muhammadiyah practices Islam not only in private matters, but also in public matters, such as building social life and civility in Indonesian society (Azca et al. 2020; Brown 2019; Hefner 2000). However, the existing literature on such Civil Islam tends to focus on the national scale. This article fills that void by focusing on Depok, as Jakarta's rapidly growing buffer city, to offer a Civil Islam perspective from a more local context.

The case of Muhammadiyah in Depok can also challenge conventional sociological views that position religions as inherently at odds with urban life (Burchardt 2019b, 2019a). In fact, the case of Muhammadiyah in Depok shows that its existence hinges on the mechanism of multiple aspirational contestations, which operate through dynamic socio-religious activism at the local, trans-local, and hierarchical levels (from the sub-branch, branch, and regional levels). This pattern of layered contestation is a fundamental

characteristic of Muhammadiyah in Depok in organizing itself and promoting religious aspirations amid the rapid secularization brought about by state policies and urban economic growth (see Aidulsyah 2023; Hew 2024; Lang 2024; Rakow 2025; van Veen and Oosterbaan 2025). As such, the analysis of local Muhammadiyah in Depok—a city that functions as Jakarta's buffer zone—could extend Muhammadiyah literature. Thus far, research in this area has been predominantly shaped by Muhammadiyah's role in the purification-social progress approach (Beck 2019; Rahman 2017), its identity as an interest group (Arifianto 2021) and a perspective of collective inner-worldly asceticism (Sukidi 2006), its embeddedness within the surrounding society (Barton 2014; Jung 2014; Nakamura 2012), and its function as a socio-religious movement oriented towards community empowerment (Fauzia 2017; Zara 2025).

This study uses qualitative methodology with a case study approach, as proposed by Creswell and Poth (2024). Muhammadiyah in Depok is viewed as a case of a local socio-religious group contesting rapid urbanization. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews and observation between September 2018 and January 2020, updated in January–March 2025. The interviews were conducted with 16 informants in six categories (see Table 1). The observations were carried out at various

Muhammadiyah activities at the sub-branch, branch, and regional levels, such as the Sunday Recitation, Sub-Branch Work Meeting, and the Deliberations at the branch and regional levels. For data analysis, three levels of coding were used with data validation and reliability strategies adopted from Neuman (2013) and Babbie (2021). The three levels of coding are: open, axial, and selective coding. Open coding is naming or conceptualizing the data, especially from the informant's perspective or *emic* terminology. The axial coding groups the open coding's results based on the same theme or mechanism. The selective coding constructs a single phenomenon that covers all aspects, themes, or mechanisms found.

Based on the preceding description, this article outlines four research objectives: 1) to analyze the structure of the Muhammadiyah grassroots community in Depok; 2) to explain the factors driving the formation of trans-local mechanisms and their role as a strategy of aspirational contestation employed by Muhammadiyah in Depok; 3) to examine the processes and patterns of tiered aspirational contestation carried out by Muhammadiyah in Depok; and 4) to identify how urbanization dynamics in Depok serve as an arena for various forms of multiple aspirational contestation of Muhammadiyah in the region.

Table 1
Informant Categories

No	Informant Category	Total
1	Muhammadiyah Regional Board	2
2	Muhammadiyah Branch Manager	4
3	Muhammadiyah Community Board	6
4	Muhammadiyah School Principal	3
5	Muhammadiyah members with vertical mobility	1
	Total	16

Source: Primary Data

The Structure of Local Muhammadiyah in Depok

The local Muhammadiyah in Depok was founded as a grassroots socio-religious association in 1953, when Depok was still a rural area. In the mid-1970s, urbanization in the area increased due to government-built housing (*Perumnas*), and the grassroots Muhammadiyah grew along with it. The basic characteristic of a grassroots community remains to this date. The organization now has 27 kindergartens, 12 primary schools, 10 junior high schools, 5 senior high schools, and a boarding school. Of the 63 urban village systems (*kelurahan*) in Depok, 60% have established Muhammadiyah grassroots communities known as *sub-branch* (*sub-branch*) (interviews with Zaenal Abidin in December 2019 and Drajat, Founder of *Perumnas* Muhammadiyah – Depok Jaya Sub-Branch, in February 2019; see also Suryana 2020; Abidin 2018) (Abidin 2018; Suryana 2020). In general, the structure of local Muhammadiyah at the grassroots level is characterized by three aspects.

First, in terms of the profile of its members, Muhammadiyah Depok is characterized by native and migrant patterns. Some define themselves as Muhammadiyah Depok natives because they have lived in Depok since the Dutch colonial era. They refused to be called Betawi people even though they are culturally and linguistically close to Betawi. Some others define themselves as Muhammadiyah Depok migrants because the founders and members are residents of the *Perumnas* (the housing estate built by the government in 1978-1981) (interviews with Haji Idrus Yahya, Chairman of Muhammadiyah Depok City Region 2016-2021, on 29 August 29 2019, and Drajat, Founder of Depok Jaya Sub-branch, in February 2019). The differences in the member profiles of the two

types of local Muhammadiyah permeate into their formation processes, basic characteristics, and social dynamics.

For instance, the establishment of native Muhammadiyah grassroots organizations between the 1950s and 1980s was driven by a collective desire for social progress. Due to the minimal presence of the state in that period, the native Muhammadiyah functioned as a self-help social movement. The communities collectively organized themselves to meet shared needs, such as establishing schools, which could not be met by individuals or the government. The native Muhammadiyah also functioned as an arena for local associations based on self-reliance and self-sufficiency. It has also grown into an autonomous local religious social movement based on kinship ties and their identity as Depok natives (interviews with Haji Maad, aged 73, a Depok native on 5 April 2005, and Haji Syamsudin, Founder of Cisalak Branch, in September 2019).

In contrast, the formation of migrant Muhammadiyah was driven by Depok's early urbanization process, as young Muhammadiyah families moved into the *Perumnas*. They have Muhammadiyah religious views and family backgrounds, and come from various Muhammadiyah communities in other areas. They established Muhammadiyah to fulfill the need for organization and socio-religious life that was typical of Muhammadiyah as in their places of origin (interview with Drajat, Founder of Depok Jaya Muhammadiyah, in February 2019; see also Syamsudin 2013).

Second, as a local social movement, Muhammadiyah in Depok is characterized by the following three mechanisms: 1) Since its official establishment in 1953, and even in its earliest form without the Muhammadiyah label during the period 1932-1952, the social activists

have been engaged in contestations, which Fraser (2007) might have viewed as achieving recognition, representation, and redistribution (see Abidin 2018; Muhsin 2018). 2) The presence of the Muhammadiyah in Depok also functions as an interest group. The two types of contestations (Numbers 1 and 2) are enabled by the support mechanisms through 3) three tiers of activism (at the sub-branch, branch, and regional levels) (see Napih 2022; Syamsudin 2013). Each level has its own distinctive functions, dynamics, and formation process. The relationship between the levels is also subject to its own socio-organizational dynamics.

Third, although Muhammadiyah in Depok is in a peripheral position relative to metropolitan Jakarta, it has demonstrated the capacity to survive and thrive. However, Muhammadiyah's growth was not as rapid as the pace of urbanization in Depok itself. The field data gathered through in-depth interviews and observations at the sub-branch, branch, and regional levels indicate that the resilience of the local Muhammadiyah is contingent upon the collective expression of social piety, which results from the practical religious understanding in Muhammadiyah (see also Jainuri 1997) and the insider-ness orientation (see also Barton 2014; Fauzia 2017; Jung 2014). The concept of collective social piety necessitates the establishment of functional and collectively managed Muhammadiyah charities (Mu'ti 2009).

The Trans-Local Muhammadiyah in Depok

Like other local Muhammadiyah organizations, Muhammadiyah Depok also relies on trans-local mechanisms: horizontal social networks between the sub-branch communities at the neighborhood level, which are either built

institutionally and organizationally by the branch or organized themselves socio-historically (see Azra 2016). In the current situation, the trans-local aspect of the sub-branch community is facilitated and accelerated by the branch organizations. The branch administrators come from the sub-branch communities under them. They organized themselves intensively and maintain active and personal interactions.

An example of this is the monthly recitation event, jointly organized by sub-branch communities, managed by what was then known as the Depok Branch in 1969. Muhammadiyah members at that time reciprocally visited sub-branch communities, which were located 7–10 km apart, on foot through pathways that had not been paved or asphalted like today's roads. Napih (2022), a young Muhammadiyah figure at that time (late 1960s), recalled it as follows:

"Of course, you can imagine... coming to each sub-branch with a distance of several kilometers [7-10 km]. Traveling on foot... At that time, there were no vehicles, no bicycles, no motorcycles, no cars, and when it rained, we had to carry our shoes and roll up our pants. Therefore, when traveling to each sub-branch in the western part... we had to spend the night at the sub-branch chairman's residence."

Various activities between these branch communities gave rise to personalized organizations. Frequent activities and inter-actions have allowed them to become personally acquainted with one another. This is especially true given that they were guided by a religious vision characterized by collective social piety, which Weber (2011a, 2011b) called as the concept of inner-worldly asceticism (Sukidi 2006). The difference is that this collective social piety is not elective affinities with capital accumulation. They did not seek personal

prosperity or material wealth in Muhammadiyah activities, but rather they are oriented, emically termed, towards *hayatan tayyibah* (loosely translated as a good life). In the concept of *hayatan tayyibah*, Muhammadiyah members are required to do good deeds, so that their lives are not only focused on themselves and their families, but also benefit their relatives, neighbors, and the livelihoods of many people.

Another example of a trans-local mechanism is the development, sustainability, and alumni network of The Junior High School (SMP) Muhammadiyah Srengseng (now SMP Muhammadiyah 01 Depok). SMP Muhammadiyah Srengseng was established in 1963 as a pioneer of secondary education at that time. Although facilities for teachers and students were mostly provided by the local Muhammadiyah sub-branch, other communities helped each other and networked horizontally. Some of the SMP teachers came from the Kukusan Sub-branch, which is 2 km away. Currently, the alumni of SMP Muhammadiyah Srengseng are the driving force behind Muhammadiyah, both at the branch and regional levels (interview with Rusli, Chairman of the Beji Timur Sub-branch 2000–2010, in February 2019). Their trans-local bond is extremely strong because they have worked closely with each other since they were young.

Aspirational Contestation at the Three Levels

As illustrated in Figure 1, the organizational structure of Muhammadiyah in Depok comprises three tiers: the sub-branch level, which operates at the neighborhood community level; the branch level, which functions at the sub-district level; and the regional level, which encompasses all activities in Depok City. The organizational development of Muhammadiyah in Depok is characterized by a progression from

the sub-branch level in 1953 to the establishment of a branch in 1961, followed by an expansion in mid-1985, and culminating in the attainment of the regional level in 1990 (interviews with Nawawi Napih in October 2019 and Zaenal Abidin in December 2019, and see also Abidin 2018; Muhsin 2018; Napih 2022; Syamsudin 2013). The evolution of the three tiers of local Muhammadiyah can be traced back to the era of the fruit farming system (1949–1980), the early phase of Depok development as a buffer zone for Jakarta (1976–2006), and the present era (2006–present) (see Table 2; see also Irsyam 2017; Suryana 2003, 2004, 2020).

Drawing upon this social history, Muhammadiyah in Depok is distinguished by the autonomy of the sub-branches among the native Muhammadiyah and the managing roles of the branches among the migrant Muhammadiyah (refer to Table 2). The history of the native Muhammadiyah branches dates to its establishment in 1961. Nevertheless, its function was limited to the supervision and coordination of the inter-sub-branch communities. Even today, the sub-branches of the native Muhammadiyah are highly autonomous and self-reliant. The roles of branch and regional organizations are merely to serve as a federation.

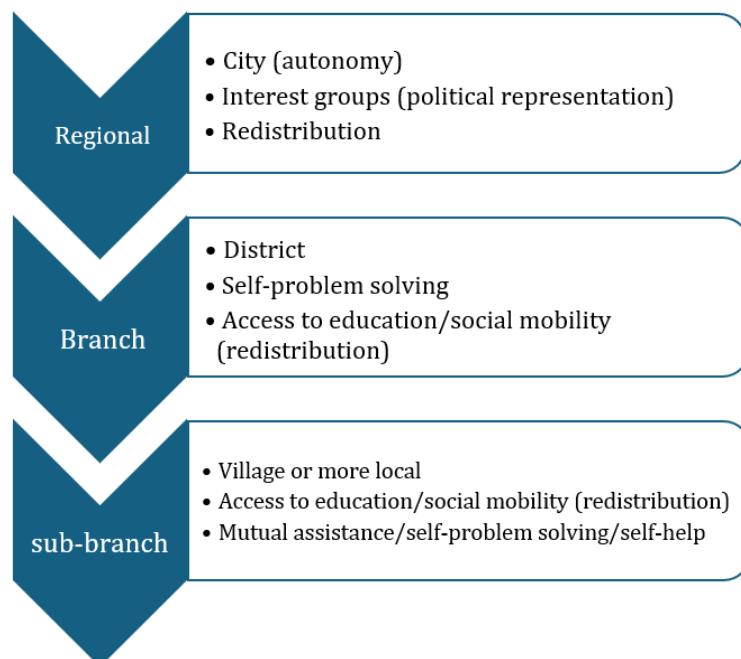
Conversely, the pattern exhibited by the migrant Muhammadiyah is distinct. The branch activities are characterized by a greater degree of functionality. The Sukmajaya Branch, for instance, directly manages several charitable bodies, including an elementary school, a recitation center, a health clinic, and a death benefit service (interview with Sanuri, Sukmajaya Branch Manager in February 2019). Furthermore, the Pancoran Mas Branch has full control over its various charitable bodies due to the organizational dormancy at the branch level (interview with Su, 68 years old, Chairman of

Pancoran Mas Muhammadiyah in September 2019).

The strengthening of institutions at the three levels of the local Muhammadiyah can be analyzed as an implication of the development of the administrative system in Depok. When the sub-branch organization was first established in Kukusan in 1953, grassroots innovation occurred alongside the development of village and sub-district institutions (interview with Haji Za, former Secretary of Kukusan Village 1974–1994, in December 2019; see also Irsyam 2017). Similarly, the expansion of the Depok Branch into three branches (Beji, Pancoran Mas, and

Depok Barat) in 1985 occurred shortly after the formation of the Administrative City of Depok in 1981 (interview with Dra, 80 years old, an elder of the Pancoran Branch, in February 2019; see also Abidin 2018; Muhsin 2018; Napih 2022). Furthermore, Muhammadiyah at the Depok City level was established in 1990, nine years after the city became an administrative district and nine years before it became an autonomous region (on 27 April 1999) (interview with Far, 66 years old, Muhammadiyah Regional Chairman 1995–2000 and 2010–2015) (see Table 2).

Figure 1
Three levels of Muhammadiyah activism in Depok City



Source: Processed from Primary Data

Table 2
The establishment of Muhammadiyah branches and sub-branches

Socioeconomic Context	Sub-branch Establishment	Branch Establishment
Fruit Farming System (1949-1985)	Kukusan (1953) Srengseng (Beji Timur) (1958) Bojong Pondok Cina (1968) Cisalak (1968)	Depok (1961) later becoming Beji (1985) Cimanggis (1974-1977)
The era of Depok as a buffer for Jakarta (1976-2005)	Kukusan 2 (1986) Beji (1985) Pancoran Mas (1985) Depok Jaya (1978) Mekar Jaya (1981) Abadi Jaya (1980) Bhakti Jaya (1984) Sukmajaya (1992) Sukamaju (1999)	Beji (1985) Pancoran Mas (1985) Sukmajaya-Cimanggis (1985-2005)
Depok's latest era (urban 2006-current)	Grand Depok City (2007) Mampang (2019)	Sukmajaya (2005-...) Pancoran Mas (1985)

Source: Processed from Syamsudin (2013), Napih (2022), and Abidin (2018)

The establishment of these Muhammadiyah sub-branches from 1953 to 1985 (see Table 2) occurred at a time when the state's role was minimal, and market mechanisms were not yet well-developed. For example, when the Kukusan Sub-branch was established in 1953, which was four years after village institutions were established in 1949 (interview with Haji Maad, 73 years old, a Depok native from Kukusan, 5 April 2005). The Village Head of Kukusan was also elected for the first time in 1953 (interview with Haji Za, former Kukusan Village Secretary 1974-1994, in December 2019), and the first sub-district office, namely the Depok Sub-district, was formed in 1953 (Irsyam 2017). Meanwhile, the sub-branch in Srengseng (now Beji Timur) and the sub-branch in Bojong Pondok Cina (now the Pondok Cina Sub-branch) were established in 1955 and 1968, respectively (Abidin 2018). Thus, the socio-institutional context for the establishment of the three native grassroots associations was contingent upon the village and sub-district government systems.

Meanwhile, the Muhammadiyah Depok City Executive Board also owns and controls specific activities known as *amal usaha* (charitable enterprises). For example, two orphanages are directly managed by the Depok City Executive Board. Both are *waqf* (donation) from Muhammadiyah sympathizers. The donors believe that Muhammadiyah is always trustworthy. The *waqf* they give is perceived to always be used in accordance with the *waqf* giver's mandate, developed beneficially and productively, and will not be sold (as stated by the donors at the inauguration of the Muhammadiyah Yuliwihs Resman Orphanage in Depok on 7 July 2019). Currently, the Board has also built a three-story building worth 2 billion rupiah for a boy orphanage, which is also located in East Beji. The old orphanage house was allocated for girls only. The new three-story orphanage building is for boys (interview Har, Regional Muhammadiyah administrator, January 2020).

Each level of Muhammadiyah (sub-branch, branch, and regional levels) carries out its projects independently and autonomously. However, there are also collaborative projects between levels. An example of this is the construction project for the *kyai's* (Islamic leadership) residence at the Darul Arqom Sawangan Islamic boarding school, which is conventionally owned by the Sawangan Kaum Branch. The condition of the *kyai's* official residence was so inadequate that it was uninhabitable. The *kyai* had to rent a house outside the premises, even though he should always be within the premises. Therefore, the Muhammadiyah fund management institution, known as Lazismu, conducted a fundraising to build a house for the *kyai*.

Likewise, the mobilization of funds for physical projects, programs, or other activities at each level of Muhammadiyah activism in Depok is carried out simultaneously (see Table 3). At the regional level, for example, in addition to the construction of a house for the *kyai* of the Darul Arqom Islamic boarding school, there are also medium and large-scale projects. The medium-scale project is the construction of a three-story orphanage building. The large-scale project is the construction of a Muhammadiyah hospital, which is estimated to require 250 billion rupiah (as of 6 January 2020, through Lazismu Kota Depok, 700,402,927.00 rupiah of *waqf* funds had been collected). These three levels of Muhammadiyah do not always focus on a single project or wait for one project to be completed before moving on to the next. As long as there is a committee willing and ready to take on the challenge, other projects can begin.

Another form of tiered aspiration contestation carried out by local Muhammadiyah at the regional level (Depok City) is as an interest group. Table 4 shows the target role of local

Muhammadiyah as an interest group, namely, to influence government policy and administration and the political process at the Depok City level. In this regard, it is important to emphasize the strategy of placing Muhammadiyah members (supporters, members, cadres, and even Muhammadiyah leaders) in strategic positions to make policy decisions in the executive and legislative branches of government, or in semi-governmental institutions such as the KPU (General Elections Commission) and BAWASLU (Elections Supervisory Agency). Additionally, there is also a strategy of placing Muhammadiyah people in top-down organizations or "red plate" social institutions, such as the Indonesian Ulema Council and the Religious Communication Forum (FKUB).

The case of Mr. F (Deputy Chairman of Depok City Muhammadiyah 1995–2000 and 2010–2015), as one of the candidates for deputy mayor in the contestation of the 2005 Depok City Mayor Election, is one illustration of Muhammadiyah's role as an interest group. Unfortunately, Mr. F and his running mate only secured fourth place out of five candidates in the 2005 Depok Mayor and Deputy Mayor election (see Affianti 2006; Matratty 2006). According to the interview with Mr. F on 7 November 2018, he was contacted by the leadership of Depok City PAN (National Mandate Party), asking for his willingness to become a candidate for deputy mayor. He agreed, although he stated that he did not have sufficient financial resources. The organizational mechanism for his resignation as Deputy Chairman of Depok City Muhammadiyah was also relatively easier. The situation would be different if he were the Regional Chairman, as the mechanism for his resignation would be far more complicated.

Table 3
Two Supports of Muhammadiyah Local Movement in Depok

Level	Charity Business	Coverage		
		Physical Project	Programs	Activities
Sub-branch	Kindergarten, Elementary School, Junior High School, Senior High School	Building construction Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (Kukusan Dua)	Re-Muhammadiyah-ization	Football match
Branch	Polyclinic, supermarket	1. Construction of Sukmajaya Branch polyclinic building 2. Building construction SMK Muhammadiyah Satu (Pancoran Mas Branch)	1. Establishment of Mampang sub-branch 2. Recitation of HPT routine	Eid prayer on the street
Regional	1. Tahfidz House 2. Orphanage	1. Hospital 2. Orphanage Building 3. Received a 1300m ² land waqf for the school	1. Cadre of Muhammadiyah activists, 2. supervision of activities 3. Centralization of school administration Muhammadiyah	1. Quarterly recitations 2. Regular meetings

Source: Processed from Primary Data

The strategy of placing professional cadres is also evident in the appointment of two Muhammadiyah Youth leaders as commissioners of the KPU and Bawaslu in Depok City for the 2019–2024 term. In Muhammadiyah's official statement, the involvement of Muhammadiyah members in the open competition to become commissioners of the KPU and Bawaslu of Depok City is based on the discourse of national activism. Hab (KPU Commissioner) comes from a family of native Muhammadiyah. His two older brothers and one of his brothers-in-law are Muhammadiyah activists. Both of his older brothers manage Muhammadiyah junior and senior high schools, which are considered the best in Depok. Before becoming a KPU Commissioner, Hab was a Muhammadiyah school teacher and a rising Muhammadiyah preacher in Depok City.

Growth in the Context of Depok Urbanization

The development and dynamics of Muhammadiyah Depok can be seen as a social phenomenon resulting from and responding to the urbanization of Depok. This is reflected in the establishment of various migrant Muhammadiyah communities, such as the Depok Baru Sub-branch (1978), Abadi Jaya Sub-branch (1980), Mekar Jaya Sub-branch (1981), and Bhakti Jaya Sub-branch (1984) (see Syamsudin 2013). These four sub-branches can be seen as a result of the establishment and settlement of *Perumnas* Depok for the middle-class migrant population—a pilot project with 20,867 housing units (BPS 1989).

Perumnas has also played a significant role as a major driving force behind the urbanization of

Depok, both in terms of socio-demographics and changes in regional structure (see Table 5 and 6). In just two years (1976-1978), the population of Depok increased by 20.74%, from 94,144 to 113,671. This number jumped 106% in just four years, between 1978 and 1982 (see Table 5). This four-year period marked the initial phase, as many migrants resided in the *Perumnas* complex. Meanwhile, Table 6 shows that the presence of *Perumnas* has increased the proportion of residential areas to nearly half of Depok's total land area. The *Perumnas* residential area also increased the total residential area to 47.18%, which is twice as much as in 1974 (before the establishment of *Perumnas*) (see also Irsyam 2017).

Young Muhammadiyah families moved in to occupy the *Perumnas* complex. They were official members of Muhammadiyah from various communities, including those from Jakarta (Kebayoran and Kemayoran), other regions on Java Island (Yogyakarta), and outside Java (Makassar and West Sumatra) (see Muhsin 2018; Syamsudin 2013) For example, Haji Far (the first Chairman of the Muhammadiyah Regional Depok) came from Yogyakarta. He completed his education at Muhammadiyah institutions: Muhammadiyah Kauman Kindergarten, Muhammadiyah Elementary School, Muhammadiyah Middle School 01 Yogyakarta, and Muhammadiyah High School 01 Yogyakarta. His father was a prominent figure in Muhammadiyah, namely the longest-serving chairman of Muhammadiyah in the organization's history, from 1968 to 1990. Haji Far himself moved to *Perumnas* due to his successful intergenerational upward mobility. He was a civil servant at a government agency in Jakarta.

The Muhammadiyah migrant community was formed through a process of mutual seeking. In the 1980s, early members who moved to *Perumnas* identified each other through the distinctive prayer practices of Tarjih Muhammadiyah, which were still rare at the time. After confirming that they were all members of Muhammadiyah and gathering more people, they began to carry out activities in accordance with Muhammadiyah traditions. The first thing they did was hold house-to-house recitations, every month on the last Sunday night. The monthly house-to-house recitation has been ongoing since 1980. For example, when Haji Far settled in *Perumnas* Dua Tengah in 1984, he immediately joined the monthly recitation. In fact, the collective activities of Muhammadiyah became more intensive when entering the fasting month of Ramadan.

Local Muhammadiyah has also responded to the growth of Depok City in various ways. One example is the presence of the Lazismu office, located on the main road and in the prestigious commercial area of Depok City. The tenancy location on the main road of Depok City can be seen as an effective megaphone of its presence and an entrepreneurial activism strategy. Margonda Road (the main road) can serve as a platform to build the trust of potential Lazismu donors in the charitable body's professionalism and integrity. At the same time, this can strengthen the brand image of the Muhammadiyah-owned financial institution (for an understanding of the concept of megaphone in the context of strategic urban areas, see Padawangi 2013; see also <https://www.lazismudepok.org>).

Table 4
Two Local Muhammadiyah Targets as Interest Groups in Depok City

Government Policy and Administration	Political Process
1. Depok City Education Office (kindergarten, elementary school, junior high school)	1. Mayor-Deputy Mayor Election
2. Regional Development Planning	2. The Election of Regional Legislative Members (DRPD) of Depok City 3. KPU and Bawaslu Commissioners

Source: Processed from Primary Data

Table 5
Population Development of Depok 1976–1999

Year	Total Population	Population density
1976	94.144	1.400,0
1978	113.671	1.690,4
1979	131.252	1.951,8
1980	203.499	3.026,2
1982	233.799	4.169,8
1990	280.916	5.010,1
1995	345.935	6.169,7
1999	866.214	4.224,5

Source: Processed from Bappeda Kodya Depok (1999); Pengemanan (1985)
Notes: Depok area 1976-1982: 6,724.57 hectares; Depok area 1982-1999: 5,607 hectares; since 1999, the Depok area has been 20,504.54 hectares.

Table 6
Changes in the Regional Structure of Depok City

	1974	1982	1999
Settlements	20,00%	47,18%	54,76%
Industry	0,00%	1,56%	1,72%
Agriculture	64,23%	34,81%	23,23%
Others	15,77%	16,45%	20,29%
In Total	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

Source: Processed from the Depok City Government 1999 and Pengemanan 1985. Notes: Others: vacant land, land for recreation and sports, education, electricity substation, train yard, cemetery, swamp, and lake.

Thus, the presence of Lazizmu on the main road symbolizes that Muhammadiyah Depok is keeping pace with the rapidly growing socio-economic dynamics of Depok City. In this regard, Lazizmu has identified white-collar workers as

the target group. White-collar workers who have agreed to regularly contribute to Lazizmu can directly donate from their deducted salaries through a partner bank. With a cashless banking system, the process of collecting donations has

become easier, more efficient, and more accountable. Similarly, the collection and withdrawal of donations for other target groups also utilize e-banking, which is convenient, efficient, and aligned with the lifestyle of the urban middle class.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the development of the local Muhammadiyah movement is intrinsically embedded in the regional administrative unit, operating simultaneously from the sub-branch to the branch and to the regional levels. Through the mechanism of multiple aspiration contestation, the organization plays a dual role. On the one hand, it mobilizes philanthropic resources for self-reliance. On the other hand, it acts as an interest group, from village head elections in the past to mayoral elections in the autonomy era. This symbiotic relationship between levels is key to the organization's resilience in adapting to the drastic transition of Depok's urbanization from a buffer zone to a complex autonomous city.

This multiple aspiration contestation is rooted in two realities of Muhammadiyah: as a grassroots association at the community level and an interest group at the city government level. In the situation of Depok as a buffer city of Jakarta, the local Muhammadiyah also has a trans-local character: they cooperate at the sub-branch level, i.e., between grassroots communities. This fact confirms the position of local Muhammadiyah as a proactive shaper of urban reality, not just a reactionary response, let alone a form of religious pathology.

This position offers empirical novelty that distinguishes the current study from previous studies of religious aspirations, which tend to center on global cities such as Singapore, Seoul, or Mumbai (Goh and van der Veer 2016; van der

Veer 2015). By placing Depok as a social context, this article offers a different perspective on the dynamics of Islamic mass organizations in a buffer city with unique sociological complexities distinctive to metropolitan centers. Also different from the single aspirational contestation approach (Goh and van der Veer 2016; van der Veer 2015), this article proposes the thesis of multiple aspirational contestation with a hierarchical structure like a pyramid. As local Muhammadiyah has a dominant capacity in realizing its aspirations at the micro and meso levels, the contestation power shrinks and becomes increasingly marginal when moving up to the macro level of the city structure.[]

References

Abidin, Zaenal. 2018. *Jejak Langkah Sang Perintis: Selayang Pandang Muhammadiyah di Kota Depok*. Depok: DKM Al Mujahidin Kukusan.

Affianti, Debby. 2006. "Proses Rekrutmen Calon Walikota dan Wakil Walikota Oleh Partai Politik untuk Pemilihan Kepala Daerah di Kota Depok 2005: Studi Kasus PKS, PD, dan PAN." [Master Thesis]. FISIP Universitas Indonesia, Depok.

Aidulsyah, Fachri. 2023. "The Rise of Urban Salafism in Indonesia: The Social-Media and Pop Culture of New Indonesian Islamic Youth." *Asian Journal of Social Science* 51(4):252–59.
doi:10.1016/j.ajss.2023.07.003.

AlSayyad, Nezar. 2013. "The Fundamentalist City, Medieval Modernity, and the Arab Spring." *Space and Polity* 17(3):270–83.
doi:10.1080/13562576.2013.850821.

Arifianto, Alexander R. 2021. "From Ideological to Political Sectarianism: Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and the State in Indonesia." *Religion, State and Society* 49(2):126–41.
doi:10.1080/09637494.2021.1902247.

Azca, Muhammad Najib, Hairus Salim, Mohammad Zaki Arrobi, Budi Asyhari, and Ali Usman. 2020. *Dua Menyemai Damai: Peran dan Kontribusi Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama dalam Perdamaian dan Demokrasi*. Yogyakarta: UGM Press.

Azra, Azyumardi. 2016. "Muhammadiyah Singapura dan Hamka: Translokal, Transnasional, dan Intelektualisme (Foreword)." in *Khairudin Aljunied. Reformisme Islam di Nusantara*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Babbie, Earl R. 2021. *The Practice of Social Research*. 5th ed. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Bappeda Kota Depok. 1999. *Depok: Dari Kota Administratif ke Kotamadya Daerah Tingkat II*. Depok: Pemerintah Kota Depok.

Barton, Greg. 2014. "The Gülen Movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: Progressive Islamic Thought, Religious Philanthropy and Civil Society in Turkey and Indonesia." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25(3):287–301. doi:10.1080/09596410.2014.916124.

Bayat, Asef. 2007. "Radical Religion and the Habitus of the Dispossessed: Does Islamic Militancy Have an Urban Ecology?" *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 31(3):579–90. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2427.2007.00746.x.

Beck, Herman L. 2019. *Fenomenologi Islam Modernis: Kisah Perjumpaan Muhammadiyah dengan Kebhinnekaan Perilaku Beragama*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Brown, Gustav. 2019. "Civic Islam: Muhammadiyah, NU and the Organisational Logic of Consensus-Making in Indonesia." *Asian Studies Review* 43(3):397–414. doi:10.1080/10357823.2019.1626802.

Burchardt, Marian. 2019a. "Assembling the Profane Materialities of Urban Religion." *Material Religion* 15(5):627–28. doi:10.1080/17432200.2019.1666584.

Burchardt, Marian. 2019b. "Religion in Urban Assemblages: Space, Law, and Power." *Religion, State and Society* 47(4–5):374–89. doi:10.1080/09637494.2019.1652020.

Burchardt, Marian, and Mariske Westendorp. 2018. "The Im-Materiality of Urban Religion: Towards an Ethnography of Urban Religious Aspirations." *Culture and Religion* 19(2):160–76. doi:10.1080/14755610.2018.1444656.

Chaplin, Chris. 2025. "Religious Authority in the Urban Mosque: Islamic Activism and the Ethics of 'Being Present' in Eastern Indonesia." *American Ethnologist* 52(2):159–70. doi:10.1111/amer.13388.

Creswell, John W., and Cheryl N. Poth. 2024. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. 5th ed. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Inc.

Fansuri, Hamzah. 2023. "On the Road of Hijrah: Contesting Identity through Urban Mobilities in Contemporary Indonesian Muslims." *Archipel* 105:115–39. doi:10.4000/archipel.3485.

Fauzia, Amelia. 2017. "Penolong Kesengsaraan Umum: The Charitable Activism of Muhammadiyah during the Colonial Period." *South East Asia Research* 25(4):379–94. doi:10.1177/0967828X17740458.

Fraser, Nancy. 2007. "Mapping the Feminist Imagination: From Redistribution to Recognition to Representation." Pp. 17–34 in *The Future of Gender*. Vol. 12. Cambridge University Press.

Goh, Daniel PS, and Peter van der Veer. 2016. "Introduction: The Sacred and the Urban in Asia." *International Sociology* 31(4):367–74. doi:10.1177/0268580916643088.

Hefner, Robert W. 2000. *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hew, Wai Weng. 2024. "Urban, Modern and Islamic': The Politics of Muslim Men's Fashion in Malaysia." *City, Culture and Society* 38:100585. doi:10.1016/j.ccs.2024.100585.

Irsyam, Tri Wahyuni M. 2017. *Berkembang dalam Bayang-Bayang Jakarta: Sejarah Depok 1950-1990-An*. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.

Jainuri, Achmad. 1997. "The Formation of Muhammadiyah's Ideology." [Doctoral Thesis]. The Institute of Islamic Studies McGill University, Montreal.

Jung, Eunsook. 2014. "Islamic Organizations and Electoral Politics in Indonesia: The Case of Muhammadiyah." *South East Asia Research* 22(1):73–86. doi:10.5367/sear.2014.0192.

Jung, Jin-Heon, and Peter van der Veer. 2016. "Urban Aspirations in Seoul: Guest Editors' Introduction." *Journal of Korean Religions* 7(2):5–9. doi:10.1353/jkr.2016.0008.

Lang, Natalie. 2024. "Urban Religion and Gendered Bodies." *City, Culture and Society* 39:100609. doi:10.1016/j.ccs.2024.100609.

Lanz, Stephan, and Martijn Oosterbaan. 2016. "Entrepreneurial Religion in the Age of Neoliberal Urbanism." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 40(3):487–506. doi:10.1111/1468-2427.12365.

Matratty, Holmes. 2006. "Perilaku Memilih dalam Pemilihan Walikota dan Wakil Walikota Kota Depok Periode 2005-2010." [Master Thesis]. FISIP Universitas Indonesia, Depok.

Mu'ti, Abdul. 2009. "Lima Fondasi Islam Berkemajuan [Foreword]." in *Islam Berkemajuan: Kisah Perjuangan KH Ahmad Dahlan dan Muhammadiyah Masa Awal*, edited by K. Suja'. Tangerang: Al-Wasath.

Muhsin, Muhsin. 2018. *KH. M. Usman: Perintis Muhammadiyah Depok, Ulama dan Pejuang Bangsa*. Jakarta: Idea Publishing.

Nakamura, Mitsuo. 2012. *The Crescent Arises over the Banyan Tree: A Study of the Muhammadiyah Movement in a Central Javanese Town (1910-2010)*. Singapore: ISEAS.

Napih, Nawawi. 2022. *30 Tahun Muhammadiyah Cabang Depok (1952-1982): Asal-Usul, Tantangan, dan Perkembangannya*. Depok: Pimpinan Daerah Muhammadiyah Kota Depok.

Neuman, William Lawrence. 2013. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education.

Pengemanan, Benny. 1985. "Pengembangan Organisasi Wilayah Kecamatan Depok Menjadi Kota Administratif Depok." [Bachelor Thesis]. Jakarta.

Rahman, Andhi Muhammad Sigit. 2017. "Islamic Revival in Indonesia: From Purification of Religion to Social Innovations." Pp. 169–92 in *Religion, Society and Economic Issues in the Islamic World*, edited by R. Ożarowski. Warsaw: Rambler Press.

Rakhmani, Inaya, and Ariane Utomo. 2023. "Spiritually Surviving Precarious Times: Millennials in Jakarta, Indonesia." *Critical Asian Studies* 55(4):473–92. doi:10.1080/14672715.2023.2260382.

Rakow, Katja. 2025. "Spatialising Urban Religious Aspirations in Singapore: New Creation Church and the Building of The Star." *Religion and Urbanity Online*. doi:10.1515/urbrel.42023010.

Smaira, Dima, and Jeroen Gunning. 2025. "Theorising from Beirut's Southern Suburbs: Spatialised Capital and Habitus in 'Nested Everyday Security Fields.'" *The*

International Spectator 1–23. doi:10.1080/03932729.2025.2540326.

Sukidi, Sukidi. 2006. "Max Weber's Remarks on Islam: The Protestant Ethic among Muslim Puritans." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 17(2):195–205. doi:10.1080/09596410600604484.

Suryana, Asep. 2003. "Transformasi Masyarakat Kota Depok: Dari Pembagian Kerja Internasional Menuju Suburbanisasi Jakarta." *Jurnal Sosiologi Masyarakat* 12.

Suryana, Asep. 2004. "Transformasi Sosial Pribumi Depok Tahun 1930–1960." *Jurnal Masyarakat dan Budaya* 6(2):29–48.

Suryana, Asep. 2020. "Membangun Keadilan Kota Dari Bawah: Gerakan Lokal Muhammadiyah di Kawasan Post-Suburban Depok" [Doctoral Thesis]. Universitas Indonesia, Depok.

Syamsudin, M. N. 2013. "Kilas Balik Lahir dan Berkembangnya Muhammadiyah Cimanggis."

van Veen, Jolien, and Martijn Oosterbaan. 2025. "Creating the Complexo de Israel: Religion, Urban Orders, and Aesthetics in Rio de Janeiro." *City & Society* 37(2). doi:10.1111/ciso.70013.

van der Veer, Peter, ed. 2015. *Handbook of Religion and the Asian City: Aspiration and Urbanization in the Twenty-First Century*. California: University of California Press.

Weber, Max. 2011a. "Prefatory Remarks to Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion." Pp. 233–50 in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Weber, Max. 2011b. "The Protestant Sects and the Spirit Capitalism." Pp. 209–226 in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Yasih, Diatyka Widya Permata, and Vedi R. Hadiz. 2023. "Precarity and Islamism in Indonesia: The Contradictions of Neoliberalism." *Critical Asian Studies* 55(1):83–104. doi:10.1080/14672715.2022.2145980.

Zara, Muhammad Yuanda. 2025. "Islam, Modernity and Well-being: Health Advice in Muhammadiyah Publications during the Dutch Colonial Period." *South East Asia Research* 33(2):205–21. doi:10.1080/0967828X.2025.2518287.