Introduction to the Special Issue

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This special issue of *Halduskultuur* addresses the practice of Islamic institutions and values in Public Administration (PA) in various Asian countries. Although it only covers four countries in Southeast Asia, namely Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Cambodia, this depiction will provide a way to strengthen the study of Islamic Public Value as part of the effort to develop a new paradigm of Non-Western Public Administration (NWPA). The publication in this special issue is part of the "Islamic Public Value: Theory, Theology, and Practice of Indigenous Cooperative Governance Institutions" project supported by the John Templeton Foundation and hosted by the Institute of Innovation of Public Purpose, University College London.

As one of the projects results is to explore and introduce Islamic governance institutions and values in Asian countries, especially in Southeast Asia, this publication seeks to find Islamic public governance practices going back to the times before Western colonialism came to Asia. Muslim communities partly use these Islamic values and institutions to maintain the continuity of identity, as well as due the struggle against Western colonialism and anti-Islamic governments that developed in several countries in the past. The coexistence of Islamic values and institutions has also developed in several Southeast Asian countries, especially for public services in education, health, conflict resolution, and community economic development. The existence of these Islamic values and institutions greatly assists government and society in the practice of modern public governance today, even surpassing the ability and reach of formal bureaucracy to solve problems faced by society. This practice of Muslim public governance is often denied by Western academics and practitioners; it is also sometimes considered a fundamentalist Islamic practice that is contrary to Western and global values. However, local values and institutions strengthen the acceptability of the goals of the wider community (Mazzucato and Ryan-Collins 2019).

The initiative to publish some practices of Islamic values and institutions in four Southeast Asian countries in this journal issue aims to elucidate the existence of Islamic public governance that has been operating for hundreds of years in serving the interests of communities on a local scale, perhaps also on a national and regional one – covering areas in several countries. The paradigm and theory of PA currently dominated by the thinking and practice in Western countries potentially slowly eliminates the existence of Islamic values and institutions (Drechsler 2013). The modernization of PA, in many ways, is more of a form of westernization, which ignores the traditions, religious values, and Islamic culture that have long existed in other countries and nations.

Thus, it is undeniable that the global-Western values of PA practices are then considered exclusive only for the "suitability/appropriateness" of Western countries, and developing countries are forced to match this. Developing countries – in this publication, Southeast Asian countries – have the power of "their color," which has a characteristic that is classical, historical, and has been going on for a long time, as previously stated in PA (Confucianism) and Islamic PA. Existence of this power is proven by the fact that both have explanations

from various theoretical literature, PA practices that have been going on for centuries, and, of course, in practice-theoretical terms, they are concretely relevant to current conditions. Thus, the Islamic paradigm, besides the Confucian one, can be considered a core part of non-Western PA (Drechsler 2013).

Research results regarding the influence of Islamic institutions, values, beliefs, and spirituality on PA are still minimal. There are at least three reasons (Ongaro and Tantardini 2024): (1) narrow interpretation of secularization – the decreasing role of religion in modern society; (2) academics focus on secular and Western PA models, thus ignoring Islamic PA; and (3) methodological challenges in linking religion with specific approaches. Based on this third reason, strengthening "Islamic" practices in PA, represented by NWPA, can influence administrative phenomena under certain conditions.

The relationship between religion, spirituality, and belief is essential to NWPA research (Ongaro and Tantardini 2023). This can be clustered into at least three research agendas: micro, meso, and macro. At the micro level, NWPA studies focus on the influence of spirituality and religion in shaping individual personalities, which can be reflected in the behavior of officials or citizens. At the meso level, the analysis includes the relationship between religion and organizational behavior. However, the macro level discusses how these three elements affect the administrative activities of government and bureaucracy. Thus, these three classifications describe the level and scope of research from the narrowest to the widest.

Islamic PA has historically had great power in the PA paradigm in developing countries but is often overlooked in regional studies of PA in developing countries. So what appears on the surface is the incredible power of PA in Western countries. This condition is proven by one example of the practice of the Ottoman Empire, which is often denied its success in practicing PA modernization, and interestingly, this modernization resembles the current practice of Western PA. The concept of the ethics of the rulers that has existed since the Ottoman Empire has similarities with Confucianism, and similar practices are present in Western PA to this day. Notably, these three paradigms have different ways, mechanisms, and contexts to achieve different goals in moving their PA (Drechsler 2014). Islamic PA is now understood to be an appropriate alternative to the global-Western paradigm. Islamic PA is discussed by highlighting its position and significance within non-Western PA through analyses of normative practices in case studies such as in Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Morocco (Chafik and Drechsler 2022). Contextualization of PA is needed so that the role of Islamic PA becomes a visible-hidden form in the middle of the existing Western PA. The reality of Islamic PA, both visible and hidden, must be recognized by all parties. For example, it is specifically related to various policy practices influenced by the wave of globalization.

The practice of Islamic values and institutions operating in several Southeast Asian countries in this special issue is also a continuation of the study of Islamic governance that has been carried out in several countries, such as Mahalla and Aul in Central Asia, Sufi Shrines in South and Southeast Asia, Zawāya and Mahadhir in North and West Africa and Khanqah in Turkey and Iran (Chafik and Drechsler 2022; El Hamel 1999; Knysh 2010; Urinboyev 2014). The existing Islamic values and institutions are diverse in their forms; 1) some operate independently in the community, 2) semi-integrated part of the government, and 3) some become a kind of secondary government. The practice of Islamic public governance is community-based to support the community's needs in public services. This practice can be called Islamic

Indigenous Cooperative Governance Institutions and is a conceptualization that was successfully rediscovered to complement state administration practices in the 21st century. (Mazzucato et al. 2021).

The primary purpose of collecting various articles in this journal from the PA science perspective is to empirically understand public governance's fundamental thoughts and objectives in Islamic values and institutions. This effort will ultimately to non-Western values in PA and how they contribute to overcoming the significant challenges faced by humanity today and in the future, especially concerning increasingly massive globalization and the critical availability of environmental issues and natural resources challenges.

The Islamic values and institutions in this special edition are mainly from Indonesia, the largest democracy in Southeast Asia and a Muslim majority. From 840 to 1267, the first Islamic Kingdom was established in Indonesia: the Samudera Pasai Kingdom in Aceh. Until now, the province of Aceh has a special autonomy status granted by the Indonesian government based on Islamic sharia. Several regional regulations based on Islamic sharia have been formed and implemented there since 2001. This shows that Islamic values and institutions have lived sustainably since Islam entered Aceh until now. Likewise, Islam developed on the island of Java, including Yogyakarta, namely the Islamic Kingdom of Mataram, which was established in 1586 and has been granted the status of a special region by the Indonesian government. The formal institutional structure in the province of Yogyakarta is still based on Islamic traditions that have developed since the Islamic Kingdom of Mataram; the Sultan was the Governor and the King. The existence of the Sultan in the official government of the province of Yogyakarta influences the forming of the traditional obedience of the community and civil servants.

Several other Islamic values and institutions currently exist in Indonesia, namely, Islamic Boarding Schools (Pesantren), which have developed in almost all regions of Indonesia and several countries in Southeast Asia, such as Thailand and the Philippines, and the Nagari tradition in West Sumatra. Pesantren is one of the traditional Islamic educational institutions established in the early 12th century in Aceh called Dayah. They were developed in the early 15th century on the island of Java, along with the spread of Islam by the Wali Songo. Pesantren has developed not only as an Islamic educational institution but also in the fields of economics and the environment, contributing socially to society. One of the core values of Pesantren is Bahtsul Masail, a discussion and deliberation forum for making decisions. Pesantren play a role in public services in society, especially in education and the community economy. Even now, it is expanding programs and activities related to efforts to prevent climate change and environmental crises (Sobirin and Khasanah 2023).

In West Sumatra, Indonesia, Islamic values have developed and continue to serve as the fundamental values guiding the life of the Nagari community, namely, adat basandi syarak, syarak basan kitabullah. From the beginning until now, these fundamental values are based on Islamic law written in the *Al-Qur'an*. The decision-making process in the Nagari customs follows the principle of the three-pointed furnace, involving three groups: intellectuals, religious scholars, and traditional leaders. A core Islamic value in the decision-making process is deliberation aimed at achieving consensus (deliberation and consensus). This value has been adopted as a fundamental principle of Indonesia's national and state ideology, as reflected in the Pancasila State Foundation.

The Islamic value of deliberation also developed in Cambodia, Thailand, and the Philippines, and it was also taught in Pesantren-like institutions in these countries. Although different in the process, the focus of deliberation in Islamic values that have developed until now in community life is the decision-making process based on the values contained in the *Al-Qur'an* and the *As-Sunnah* and involves religious scholars and intellectuals. Even in the city of Santos, Mindanao, Philippines, the value of *shura* (deliberation) has been used as an institution for conflict resolution that occurs in society, including in cases of family disputes and divorce.

Islamic values and institutions in Southeast Asia, written about in this special issue, pave the way for its rediscovery and use in PA practice. It can be an alternative option that can co-exist with Western PA values and institutions. As this is a pioneering publication, other studies and writings are needed to complement the practice of Islamic values and institutions to strengthen NWPA studies..

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