

Can You Do Hip-Hop in Yogyakarta? Global-Local Nexus in Javanese Hip-Hop

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Abstract

The emergence of the internet and the development of transportation technology have enabled massive products, people, and ideas to travel beyond borders and nations. They also foster and intensify the interaction between global and local culture. This paper attempts to examine of the global-local nexus in globalisation by conducting a case study. It focuses on the growth of hip-hop as a form of a global culture in the Javanese society. The discussion includes the development of hip-hop as a global culture, the identification of factors that affect the acceptance of hip-hop in Javanese society, and the Javanese hip-hop as a form of hybridization.

It concludes that the society responds to the global product based on its own interpretation. It also highlights that the process of global-local nexus depends on several factors. The dissemination of hip-hop culture in Indonesia gains advantages from the policy of Indonesian government to be more open to the international discourse as well as to grant more freedom to the media industry in the 1990s. Furthermore, the development of hip-hop is supported by the characteristics of Javanese society which deeply respects mutual understanding and collaboration across cultures. The similarity of hip-hop elements to the forms of Javanese traditional music and arts such as *Wayang* (puppet show) and *Parikan* (traditional poems) also plays pivotal roles in creating a hybrid product as a result of the interaction between global and local culture; that is a Javanese hip-hop.

Keywords: Globalisation, Global, Local, Culture, Hybridisation

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Introduction

Globalisation has become a popular term in everyday life of the society. It exists in the class discussion at school, presents in the headline of daily newspapers, and even becomes a trending topic in family discussion during dinner time. However, how do we define the notion of globalisation? Perhaps, because of its complexity and multi-dimensions, there are many ways to describe globalisation and its effects. Giddens (1990, as cited in Tomlinson, 1997) considers globalisation as ‘the very tissue of spatial experience alters, conjoining proximity and distance in which way have few parallel in prior age’. In other words, globalisation brings world-wide society closer in the way it never happened in the past. The advancement of technology by the late of the twentieth century has accelerated the globalisation process throughout the world. The emerge of the internet and the development of transportation technology, for example, has enabled massive products, people, and ideas to travel beyond borders and nations. Today it is easy to find tropical fruits in local groceries in Melbourne, to get books written by foreign authors, or to visit ten countries located in three different continents in less than a week. In other words, the world nowadays is shrinking, and McLuhan’s notion regarding a global village is evoking (Robinson, 1997).

Globalisation has affected many dimensions of human life, from economy to politics. Globalisation also possesses ‘cultural effects’ (Jurriëns, 2004, p. 5) which are related to the way of global and local culture interacts. The interaction between the local and the global, widely known as a global-local nexus is continually become a growing issue revolves around globalisation. There are at least three scenarios regarding the global-local interaction in the globalisation process: homogenisation, heterogeneity, and hybridisation (Robinson, 2007). Previously, there was prevailing notion that globalisation leads to ‘cultural imperialism’. Friedman (1994, as cited in Tomlinson, 1997) suggests that cultural imperialism can be signified by the rise of domination of central cultures, dissemination of certain values, products, and way of living. This practice creates homogenisation of the culture of the dominant, in this case, the culture of the western (The United States and Europe). However, in some other part of the world, society reacts to the phenomena of cultural imperialism by building total rejection of receiving other culture particularly from the dominant one. This idea created ‘heterogeneity’ which can be stated in several different forms. It may reflect in the government’s policy to limit or ban cultural products or in the form of anarchy movement such as Jihad, which Barber (1995, p. 9) believes may begin from the ‘simple search of local identity’ against the colonising cultures’. The last scenario called Hybridisation means that there is a combination of global and local producing the new culture in certain society. this new culture is constantly developing and is depending on the interpretation of the society (Robinson, 2007).

This essay examines the existence of global-local nexus in the frame of globalisation by conducting a case study. It specifically examines the growth of Hip-hop in Javanese Culture which is practiced by local musical group called Jogja Hip-Hop Foundation. This essay is developed in three sections. The first section discussed hip hop as a global culture. The second section explores the history of Hip-Hop in Indonesia especially Yogyakarta and identifies factors that support the acceptance of Hip Hop in this city. The last part attempt to highlight the form of hybridisation between hip-hop and the Yogyakarta’s local culture: A Javanese Hip-Hop.

Hip-hop as a global culture

Hip-hop music was born in Bronx, New York City which still well-known as a home and centre for this culture until nowadays. Hip-hop became very popular after D. J Kool Herc introduced it in 1973 during after school party in Sedgwick Ave (Gonzales, 2008). Since then, this innovative music rapidly spread in poor neighbourhoods of New York. Price III (2006, p. 21) identifies four key features of hip-hop as a global culture: The DJ, Graffiti, Bboys and Bgirls, and The MC. As this kind of music firstly emerged in the Afro-American society with circumstances of discrimination and marginality (Mohamad, 2014), most of the hip-hop lyrics expressed social protests and disappointments by using violent, rebel, and rude language (Smitherman, 1997). The use of rude words become the main reason why some of the hip-hop artists are prohibited to conduct performances or have their performances censored. Despite its controversy, hip-hop continually grows as one of the popular music all over the world. The function of hip-hop developed diversely in several parts of the world (Varela, 2014). In Germany, Hip-hop is the main medium for youth minorities to articulate their critics regarding racism and national identities (Bennett, 1999). In other parts of society such as Cambodia, local singers use hip-hop to commemorate the tragic history of genocide in the country. Meanwhile, a group of youngsters in Singapore utilises it to maintain local identity of a nation (Mattar, 2003, as cited in Varela, 2014).

The development of Hip-Hop in Indonesia and Yogyakarta

The relations between global and local, commonly known as a global-local nexus is a dynamic and multidimensional. Appadurai (1990, as cited in Robinson, 2007) proposes 5 (five) factors which affect the exchange of ideas in globalisation: 'mediascapes, ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes'. Furthermore, Tomlinson (1997) suggested that the dialectics between global and local may be affected by several factors such as economic power and domination, cultural autonomy, and social regulation. This section aims to further elaborate dominant factors which influence the development of Hip-hop culture in Indonesia, particularly in Yogyakarta.

Socio-Political Factors

The transformation in the political environment is one of the pivotal factors that provides access for western culture to interact with local culture in Indonesia and Yogyakarta. At the initial era of the independence, Indonesia posed a distance from Western countries. This condition occurred due to the heavy tension between Indonesia and the United States. In the 1950s, the first president of Indonesia, Soekarno, eliminated the flow of western products to Indonesia especially in the form of cultural products. He banned the circulation of Western popular music such as Rolling Stones and The Beatles. In contrast, he encouraged the development of local culture by establishing Lembaga Kesenian Rakyat (Community Art Centre, well known as LEKRA) (Ida, 2008). The major media consumed by society such as radio and television were monopolized by the government and only contained national or local contents. Their contents were constructed mainly to promote national identity in order to build and to develop national 'integrity and unity' (Ida, 2008, p. 96). The second president, Suharto still conducted several attempts 'to control public discourse

and cultural production' (Bidden, 2005, p. 8). However, this regime imposed softer regulations and policy regarding the nation's relationship with western countries through media. When private radio existed for the first time in Indonesia, there was no regulation to control them (Enviradene, 2012). Although national television channel, TVRI, was still dominated with local and national contents, when private television channel was introduced in 1989, there were no strict regulation to limit the number of the foreign program for these private institutions. During 1990 and 1991, 90% broadcasted programs of two big private television stations in Indonesia namely Rajeswari Citra Televisi (RCTI) and Surya Citra Televisi (SCTV) were imported program (Ida, 2008).

The rapid growth of television and radio made them become 'agents of westernisation' for Indonesian society (Enviradene, 2012, p. 75). In 1995, MTV was introduced to some of the audience in big cities in Indonesia through the cooperation with national private television station Antena which allocate a quarter half of its 24 hours broadcast time to air MTV programs (Baluch, 2007). At the same time, the embryo of hip-hop culture in Indonesia was formed with the appearance of Iwi K, who is considered as the first Indonesian rapper. His first album in 1990's became new phenomenon in national music industry and created positive trends for hip hop culture in Indonesia (Bidden, 2005). In 2002, MTV collaborated with Global TV to provide twenty-four hours broadcast for seven big cities in Indonesia (Jakarta, Surabaya, Semarang, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Medan, and North Sumatra (Baluch, 2007). In this era, the western rappers such as Eminem, Missy Elliot, and P. Diddy were very popular among Indonesian youths in the major regions such as Yogyakarta.

Socio-Cultural Factor

Yogyakarta is a small city in Java Island, Indonesia. It covers an area of only 32 km square. Despite the small area, Yogyakarta plays a great and influential role for Indonesia. It has the significant contribution during Indonesian struggle for independence. It also becomes one of the special regions in Indonesia beside Aceh. The special region attribute is related to the status of Yogyakarta as a kingdom. With this attribute, the Sultan (King) of Yogyakarta will be automatically gain a position as a governor of this region. Yogyakarta is often considered as well as the heart of Java culture (Richter, 2012). It is well-known as a region which still strongly holds and appreciates local cultural values. In this city, the traditional language named *Bahasa Jawa* (Javanese language) is still being used both in everyday conversations and in the formal meeting in a local government setting. It also becomes a part of the curriculum in formal schools as a compulsory subject from elementary (6 years) until junior high school (3 years) grade. *Bahasa Jawa* has a certain degree of politeness in its usage. *Krama* is a polite form of Javanese language Javanese people use it to talk with older or respected people while *Ngoko* is a kind of language which considered less polite (Zentz, 2015). Javanese people also still proud of wearing batik (a kind of tie and dye fabric which is admitted by UNESCO as a world cultural heritage in 2010) in their daily occasions.

With all characteristic of Javanese culture in the society of Yogyakarta, it seems there is no room for hip-hop music to develop in this region. The relations between Javanese culture and hip-hop contains several paradoxes: between polite and rude, between traditional and popular. So, how it is possible for hip-hop culture made its

way to this kind of society? In the book *Feeling Asian Modernities*, Iwabuchi (2004, p .12) contends that the popularity of certain cultural products, in this case, Japanese TV series, 'is driven by the perception of cultural proximity'. While it looks like there is no similarity in culture, it is the fact that hip-hop and Javanese culture share some things in common. Javanese culture possesses several forms of traditional arts. One of them is *Parikan* which can be loosely translated as a traditional poem. As it contains the harmonious rhymes, Mohamad Marzuki suggests that *Parikan* has similarity with hip-hop (Acara TV Keren, 2015). Other forms of Javanese traditional arts name *Wayang* or puppet show also comparable with hip-hop. *Wayang* performance features *Dalang* who tells a story with the company of traditional instrument called Gamelan (Varela, 2014). The way the *Dalang* interacts with the music produced by gamelan is also similar to the way the rapper interacts with the music from the turntable in hip-hop music (Intel, 2011). In addition, there is a unique characteristic of Javanese society in Yogyakarta. Despite its high respect for the traditional culture, the member of society in Yogyakarta is relatively susceptible to new culture and innovation. The role of Yogyakarta as one of the second main tourist destinations in Indonesia after Bali influence this characteristic. Furthermore, Yogyakarta also becomes the education city and centre for the art festivals. As a result, it requires the members of society to interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. These determinant factors affect the interaction between global and local in the form of Javanese hip-hop.

What is the Javanese Hip-Hop?

What is the Javanese Hip-hop? This cultural form can be considered as a form of hybridisation as a result of a global-local nexus between Western culture represented by hip-hop and the Javanese culture. Jogja Hip Hop Foundation, which popularises this Javanese hip-hop was established in 2003. In general, Javanese hip-hop maintains some aspects from American hip-hop. It uses turntable and electronic music combined with the lyrics from the rapper. The member of this group also has an identical clothing style with loose shirts and trousers as well as the hat. Just like the original hip-hop, the lyrics from Jogja Hip Hop Foundation contain social and political critics and represent the grassroots. Meanwhile, it also highlights the characteristics of Javanese culture by using the Javanese language in the lyrics and batik shirts as a default apparel in their performance. The sounds of Gamelan are blended harmoniously with the modern musical instrument in its songs (Mohamad, 2014). Although Jogja Hip Hop Foundation mostly uses *Ngoko* in their songs' lyrics, swearing words can be considered very rare to be appeared in their songs.

The existence of Javanese hip-hop in Javanese society is the evidence that the analysis of the relation between global and local connection should not under evaluate the capacity of the consumers. Rather than a victim of globalisation, the consumer is now the part of agent of change. Mohamad (2014) stated that the birth of Javanese hip-hop is rooted from being open minded to new cultures, accepting some favourable values, and mix them with traditional Javanese culture. This notion is in line with the idea of Jenkins (1992, as cited in Bennet, 2014) related to 'textual poachers', where consumers (fans) can play significant roles which affect the production sectors.

Conclusion

Globalisation has been experienced by most countries in all over the world. However, the interaction process between global and local from one country to another is different. As Lee (1998, as cited in Ida, 2008) the audience does not adopt and respond to global products 'in a single way'. In the case of Jogja Hip Hop Foundation, the interaction between global and local culture is much affected by some factors such as government policy and the socio-cultural condition of the local. The change of media policy from Soekarno to Soeharto has given chances for media particularly television and radio to disseminate Western culture to the society. In addition, Yogyakarta and its society are relatively open to other cultures. This characteristic may be a result of the role of Yogyakarta as a tourism destination, art centre as well as city of education where interaction with 'outside' culture happens in high intensity. Furthermore, the acceptance of Hip Hop culture in Yogyakarta society and its ability to blend with the local culture cannot be separated from the fact that both of these cultures share something in common. The interaction between hip-hop and the Javanese culture then produce a distinct cultural product called Javanese Hip-hop.

As a hybrid product, Javanese Hip Hop accommodates both of the global and local cultures. Some original identities of Western hip-hop such as the use of loose clothing and the elements such as rapping and the use of turntable remains. However, there are some signs of local identity which are very dominant in this Javanese hip-hop. This case study then supports the idea that 'global do affect but cannot control the local meaning' (Ang, 1995, p. 127) as the culture developed by 'distinct way of interpreting of the process' (Robinson, 1997, p. 140).

This paper mainly examines the relationship between global and local by conducting case study of Java hip-hop. However, it is worth noting that political and cultural factors are not the only determinant of this relations. The dissemination of hip-hop through media such as radio and television, for example, would be less influential if supporting infrastructures such as transmitting stations do not exist. Furthermore, it will be beneficial to explore the relationship between global and local in the distribution of this Java hip-hop. The role of the global commercial channels such as the MTV in distributing local cultures can be regarded as one important aspect that can be covered in the future research.

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