
Ideology, Values and Norms in Hip-hop Community Wijilan Yogyakarta: An Ethnographic Study

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the cultural adaptation of American hip-hop in Wijilan, Yogyakarta, focusing on the dynamics of hybridity between global and local cultures. Hip-hop, originally rooted in the Bronx during the 1970s, has become a global cultural force that merges with various traditions worldwide. In Wijilan, the hip-hop community has blended the individualistic values of American hip-hop with the Javanese collective ethos of *gotong royong*. This fusion results in unique artistic expressions. Using ethnographic methods, this study reveals hip-hop's role as an ideology through identity formation, resistance, cultural expression, and social commentary within communities by observing practices, exploring identity, highlighting resistance, interpreting symbols, and assessing impact. Events, like Soringin Hip-hop Festival, highlight the role of hip-hop as a platform for cultural exchange and social commentary, showcasing a blend of music, graffiti, and dance that embodies both local and global influences. The study concludes that the cultural hybridity in Wijilan's hip-hop community fosters a new, dynamic identity that maintains traditional values while embracing contemporary, global trends, contributing to both cultural preservation and innovation.

Keywords: *cultural hybridity; hip-hop community; ideology; norms; values; wijilan yogyakarta*

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INTRODUCTION

Hip-hop culture, born in the Bronx, New York in the 1970s, has evolved into a global phenomenon that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries. Its four main elements - MCing (rapping), DJing, breakdancing, and graffiti - have become a means of self-expression for marginalized youth, reflecting the values of individuality, resistance, and creativity (Chang, 2005).

The spread of hip-hop around the world was influenced by globalization, mass media, and diaspora. In the 1980s and 1990s, media such as MTV and digital music distribution accelerated hip-hop's adoption in various countries. Its flexibility in accommodating local narratives allowed for the creation of unique versions across cultures (Alim, 2009).

In Indonesia, hip-hop became known in the late 1990s through the media and independent music communities. Yogyakarta, as a center of art and culture, became one of the cities that responded quickly to this phenomenon. In Wijilan, hip-hop was enthusiastically received by the younger generation who adapted it to the local context, harmonizing hip-hop values such as freedom of expression and struggle against

injustice with the local wisdom of Javanese culture.

Yogyakarta is known as a city of arts and culture with strong Javanese traditions. The region is a space where tradition and modernity meet, making it a fertile ground for cultural hybridity. Wijilan, one of the historical neighborhoods in Yogyakarta, is a clear example of how global culture such as hip-hop is integrated into the local context.

The hip-hop community in Wijilan began to grow in the early 2000s. They were inspired by the hip-hop music, fashion, and movement they saw in the international media. The group started to create creative spaces such as rap battle events, breakdance performances, and graffiti in the corners of the city. Hip-hop became a medium to convey local issues while building solidarity among its members.

The hybridity of hip-hop culture in Wijilan occurs through the process of adapting the value of individualism from American hip-hop with the Javanese value of collectives. The hip-hop community in Wijilan adopts a collective work format in every activity, such as organizing events or creating artwork, reflecting a strong spirit of *gotong royong*

(Raditya, 2014). The rap songs they create raise local issues such as community welfare, education, and cultural preservation, delivered in Javanese or mixed with Indonesian. International hip-hop clothing styles are combined with traditional Javanese elements, such as the use of batik cloth in their clothing designs.

Elements of breakdancing and graffiti are often integrated with traditional performing arts such as *gamelan* or *wayang kulit*, creating a unique fusion. This process of hybridity results in a new local identity, where hip-hop in Wijilan becomes a medium to create a local identity that is modern but still rooted in Javanese tradition.

Through rap lyrics and graffiti, this community conveys social messages that are relevant to the surrounding community. Hip-hop art is integrated with local traditions, creating a space where young and old generations can interact, and encouraging the development of a creative economy through artworks such as murals and hip-hop performances that are now part of the cultural tourism attraction in Yogyakarta.

Cultural hybridity in the hip-hop community in Wijilan

shows that cultural adaptation can produce unique forms of creative expression, enrich local culture, and strengthen community identity. Hip-hop in Wijilan is not just an adoption of global culture, but a transformation that shows the richness of local cultural adaptations in the midst of globalization (Laksono et al., 2018). This research aims to explore how American hip-hop culture is adapted by the hip-hop community in Wijilan, analyze the dynamics of hybridity between global and local cultures, and identify the results of this hybridity process on the local community and culture.

Local Hip Hop, from a researcher's perspective, has never been as vibrant as it has been in the past five years. Of course, many factors have led to this. Most might point to Rich Brian's skyrocketing popularity in the US and European music scene as the main reason why local hip-hop feels interesting. Others are more excited about the new generation of MCs and beatmakers who have emerged with phenomenal works. These young talents are not afraid to take the aesthetic and technical aspects of local rap music and lyrics to the next level. Some think that the hip-hop scene has become

interesting, thanks to the success of the genre's diaspora in reaching remote areas of Indonesia supported by information technology. You can find hip-hop in areas that you never imagined before, from Jakarta, Bandung, the outskirts of Lake Toba, Cirebon, Purwokerto, Banjarmasin, Flores, Ternate, and remote Papua.

Every local hip-hop fan should turn their attention to one of the hottest spots: Wijilan, Yogyakarta. Even the incident with the police that happened earlier this month will not stop hip-hop activists from Wijilan. Before I go any further, I need to emphasize that Yogyakarta successfully earned its own place in the local hip-hop scene two decades ago. In the early days of hip hop in Indonesia, Yogyakarta played an equally important role as other cities such as Medan, Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya. The legendary hip hop unit G-Tribe was included in the compilation album *Pesta Rap Vol.1* when it was released in 1993 with lyrics entirely in Javanese. However, it cannot be denied that the most interesting period of hip hop in Yogyakarta is the past five years. To be precise, a collective called Hellhouse Indo was born in the middle of a weekly night hangout on a

street in the heart of Yogyakarta called Wijilan. Hellhouse Indo began with the collective's intention to create a shared studio, given the difficulty of access for them to record independently. Over time, the hangout became a medium for them to release and distribute albums. *Hellhouse Indo* has released albums *Begundal Clan*, *D.P.M.B.*, and the veteran debut *Boyz Got No Brain* late last year. However, they basically promote local material that is not always released from their own community. For example, Bacil Kill's debut album *ANTIXUNIX* and local hardcore unit Serigala Malam's single.

Hellhouse Indo is more than just a record label. This community is a medium for young people who love hip-hop to carry out activities with local residents. Starting from organizing rap and graffiti events or anything that intersects with their activities as a group of residents in one territory, from "Watchout Dab", and "Angkring Hip Hop" to "Beat Camp". However, the significant points to summarize the reason, "what is the importance of Wijilan?", then there are three most important things for all local hip hop activists to pay more attention to the young

people who keep this subculture fire burning in Yogyakarta.

METHODOLOGY

Fishkin (2005) emphasizes the importance of understanding American culture as a transnational entity, meaning that it is not tied to just one geographical location but spreads and transforms through cross-cultural interactions. In the context of hip-hop, this approach helps to understand how American hip-hop culture changes when it is adapted to local cultures, such as in Wijilan. Using this approach, this research explores how elements of American hip-hop, such as rap, breakdancing, and graffiti, are received and interpreted through the lens of Javanese culture, which is rich in collective values.

Ideology is defined as a system of representations, beliefs, and ideas that serve to maintain and reproduce the social order (Castells, 2013). Castells argues that ideology functions as a mechanism of domination, shaping perceptions and masking the underlying power dynamics of society. In the urban context, this often involves the legitimization of spatial organization and urban development practices that reflect and reinforce the interests of dominant social

groups. By framing these practices as natural or inevitable, ideology obscures the inequalities and contradictions inherent in the urban system. This expression reveals how hip-hop is not merely a form of entertainment but has become a value system that influences followers' attitudes, behaviors, and worldviews. This transformation reflects the global nature of hip-hop as a tool for self-expression and social resistance, while also showing how the Wijilan community has localized these principles to build a unique cultural identity.

Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity (2015) helps explain the merging of American and Javanese cultures in Wijilan's hip-hop community, creating a "third space" where unique cultural expressions form. This aligns with Sven Ove Hansson's *The Structure of Values and Norms* (2001), which highlights how values and norms can be both static and dynamic, playing a role in cultural integration. When cultures interact, their values and norms blend and adapt, forming new systems through processes like assimilation and cross-cultural exchange, which reshape social interactions and cultural identities. For example, rap lyrics in Javanese

and the use of hip-hop elements in hip-hop performances show how global and local cultures influence each other and make hip-hop a value ideology in everyday life. To understand this hybridity process, an ethnographic method was used based on Spradley's (2016) ethnographic interview approach. This approach allows researchers to explore cultural meanings through in-depth interviews with members of the hip-hop community in Wijilan.

DISCUSSION

This research began on Saturday, February 3, 2024, with the researcher starting observations in the Wijilan area, Yogyakarta. As an initial step, the researcher captured images of the surrounding area and observed the dynamics that were taking place there. The purpose of this observation was to gain a general understanding of the atmosphere in Wijilan, which is known as the center of local hip-hop community activities. The researcher did not only observe the physical area but also sought to understand the social interactions that occurred there.

On the same day, the researcher met one of the community members who then introduced the researcher to several other individuals,

including rappers who were frequently active in the Wijilan area. The researcher's main informant, Rezky, who works as a barista at a local café, played a key role in opening connections with the community members. Through this introduction, the researcher began to interact more with the community members and delve into their daily lives and routines.

The researcher did not conduct observations every day but arranged visits approximately four to five times a week. The researcher tended to visit on weekends or holidays such as Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, which are times when the community's activities were more intense. However, the researcher realized that not all community members gathered on every occasion. Despite this, the researcher made an effort to consistently be present in Wijilan to observe the various activities and interactions that occurred there.

From the researcher's view, socially, the Wijilan community could be categorized as lower middle-class, with the majority working as traders, craftsmen, or small business owners. As an area that is part of the *Kraton* Yogyakarta territory, Wijilan holds a close connection with traditional Javanese values and

culture. These values, including the Islamic teachings that have developed in this area, greatly influence the local community's worldview regarding outside cultures, including the hip-hop culture brought by this community. Several informants told the researcher that before the existence of Hellhouse Indo, the people around Wijilan strongly upheld the Javanese and Eastern values they had inherited since childhood. These values were deeply influenced by the Islamic teachings that were ingrained in their daily lives. The presence of this community, bringing hip-hop culture from the outside, sparked various reactions, especially among those who held conservative views about culture and morality.

Hip-hop as an Ideology

A young community figure, Muh. Bima Sakti Nur (Personal communication, February 18, 2024) describes the role of hip-hop as "Hip-hop sudah menjadi ideologi dalam keseharian [Hip-hop has become an ideology in daily life]. Nur's perspective also highlights hip-hop as a vehicle for resistance, particularly against social, economic, and political pressures that often marginalize young people. Since its inception, hip-hop has

provided a platform for voicing dissent, and in Wijilan, it plays a similar role in challenging dominant narratives and structures. Through lyrics that speak to issues like inequality, oppression, and social justice, hip-hop offers the youth a means to express their discontent and resist cultural and systemic limitations. This "ideology in daily life" is not passive but is woven into active expressions of self-identity and community solidarity, empowering individuals to reshape their realities and assert their voices against broader social constraints.

Furthermore, the daily integration of hip-hop in Wijilan showcases its role in community building and informal education. Hip-hop culture fosters spaces where young people feel accepted, understood, and motivated to pursue their creative and intellectual passions. In these spaces, they develop critical skills, from artistry in graffiti or breakdancing to technical know-how in music production. This daily practice of hip-hop, as Nur describes, serves as an inclusive ideology, one that encourages continuous learning, emotional resilience, and a sense of belonging. Hip-hop's ideals of

empowerment and solidarity become embedded in everyday routines, illustrating how hip-hop is not only an art form but also an enduring influence that shapes the way the younger generation in Wijilan interacts with the world. The integration of hip-hop into daily practices demonstrates its transformative potential in shaping identity and social interactions (Fishkin, 2005). What began as a global cultural import has now rooted itself deeply in local contexts, resonating with young individuals and redefining their everyday experiences.

The infusion of hip-hop into daily practices also reflects a deeper cultural process, where global individualistic tendencies blend with Javanese communal values like *gotong royong*. This fusion is evident in community events that bring people together, such as rap battles or breakdancing showcases that emphasize cooperation and mutual support over competition.

Javanese culture, with its rich traditions in music, dance, and storytelling, provides a unique backdrop for the adaptation of global hip-hop. Traditional Javanese music, such as gamelan, emphasizes rhythm and communal participation, mirroring hip-hop's focus on beats and

collective expression. This blending allows Javanese artists to maintain their cultural identity while engaging with a global movement, creating a distinctive fusion that resonates with both local and international audiences.

Both Javanese culture and hip-hop share themes of social justice and resistance. Javanese history is marked by struggles against colonialism and oppression, paralleling the narratives found in hip-hop that critique systemic injustices. Artists in Java often use hip-hop to address local issues such as poverty, corruption, and social inequality, drawing connections to the broader global hip-hop movement. The incorporation of the Javanese language and idioms into lyrics further enriches this cultural expression, allowing for a deeper connection with local audiences while remaining accessible to a wider audience.

The spirit of community and collaboration is deeply rooted in both Javanese culture and hip-hop. Traditional performances often involve collective participation, which is mirrored in hip-hop through collaborations among artists and local communities. Javanese hip-hop artists are known for their innovative

approaches, blending traditional elements with contemporary styles to create a distinct sound. This reciprocal relationship not only showcases how local cultures can reinterpret global influences but also highlights the importance of cultural exchange in the modern music landscape, enriching both Javanese culture and global hip-hop.

Building on this transformative role, among young people in Wijilan, hip-hop has become more than just entertainment; it has become "mendarah daging" or deeply ingrained in their identity, as expressed by Ravitto Adji Setyoko, another member of the community (personal communication, March 10, 2024). Hip-hop plays an important role as a tool for resisting the social, economic, and political pressures they face. Since its inception, hip-hop has been a voice for marginalized communities to express dissatisfaction with injustice. For the youth in Wijilan, hip-hop also serves as a means of resisting dominant narratives that restrict them, both locally and nationally. Through rap lyrics that address issues of marginalization and inequality, they not only depict their living conditions but also present a clear and organized form of resistance.

Also, hip-hop as an ideology plays a critical role in how these young individuals navigate their social environments, particularly within the constraints of local and global inequalities. As a cultural product of marginalized communities, hip-hop provides a platform for articulating personal and collective struggles, helping youth in Wijilan to challenge societal norms and the pressures imposed by conventional expectations. The ideologies embedded in hip-hop music, dance, fashion, and language offer alternative modes of resistance to the hegemonic forces that often marginalize or silence their voices. Hip-hop, thus, becomes a tool for asserting agency, constructing identity, and rejecting societal marginalization, allowing young people to find solidarity within a global movement that resonates with their lived experiences. This interplay is vividly reflected in their creative works, where Javanese language and traditional motifs intertwine with global hip-hop aesthetics, fostering a profound sense of belonging while simultaneously embracing a global cultural movement (Bhabha, 2015).

The amalgamation of hip-hop and Javanese artistic

traditions underscores this profound integration. Traditional motifs and symbols are revitalized in graffiti art and fashion, as batik patterns integrate with streetwear, illustrating a visual conversation between history and contemporary culture. This innovative amalgamation not only strengthens cultural continuity but also reinterprets the concepts of modernity and Javanese identity. It embodies Bhabha's notion of the 'third space', wherein components of diverse cultures amalgamate to create novel, hybrid identities that incorporate aspects of both yet are exclusively affiliated with neither.

Furthermore, hip-hop's influence on self-expression affects how youth in Wijilan view their community and their position within it. This elevates hip-hop from mere entertainment to a form of activism, serving simultaneously as a mirror of reality and a driver of change. By incorporating local narratives into their songs, dance performances, and public art, the youth both entertain and educate while fostering dialogue. This cultural movement cultivates a sense of belonging intricately linked to local values while simultaneously embracing and

contributing to the global progression of hip-hop culture.

Hip-hop serves as a universal expression of struggle, emerging as a response to social, economic, and political challenges faced by marginalized communities worldwide. Artists use the genre to articulate their experiences with oppression, discrimination, and inequality, creating a global connection among hip-hop communities. This cultural movement not only allows for the reclamation of identity but also acts as a form of resistance against dominant narratives. Through powerful social commentary, hip-hop addresses pressing issues such as poverty, violence, and racism, resonating with listeners who may be experiencing these challenges firsthand.

Moreover, hip-hop empowers individuals and encourages activism, with many artists collaborating with community organizations to mobilize support for various causes. The genre's adaptability allows it to resonate across diverse cultural contexts, while still maintaining a consistent goal of addressing social injustice. By fostering a sense of community among those who share similar struggles, hip-hop creates networks of support

that amplify voices and messages, ultimately serving as a vehicle for social change and empowerment, as described by Daru Isnawan (personal communication, March 30, 2024), "Bangun tidur dengerin Hip-hop, dan jadi mood booster kalau mau kerja [I wake up listening to Hip-hop, and it is a mood booster when I want to work]". His words highlight the psychological significance of hip-hop as a source of energy and emotional regulation. This ritualistic interaction illustrates how hip-hop in Wijilan is not merely consumed but actively integrated into personal routines, underscoring its role as a cultural and emotional anchor that deeply influences daily life (Spradley, 2016). Taking this immersion, a step further, Alexander Sinaga notes the pervasive nature of hip-hop, "Mau ngapa-ngapain pasti ada hubungannya dengan hip-hop [Anything I do must have something to do with hip-hop]". This sentiment underscores the holistic adoption of hip-hop as a lifestyle, extending its reach into fashion, language, and behavior.

Adding another dimension, M. Rifqi Haikal R. (23) points out how local hip-hop has heightened his awareness of Jogja's environment, "Setelah sering menikmati karya karya

mereka saya jadi lebih aware terhadap lingkungan Jogja [After enjoying their works, I became more aware of Jogja's environment]. This observation aligns with the global trend of localized hip-hop becoming a platform for addressing and reflecting on community-specific issues. In Jogja, hip-hop's lyrical narratives often delve into urbanization, environmental challenges, and social inequality, resonating deeply with local audiences and fostering collective awareness. This transformative aspect positions hip-hop as not just a cultural expression but a catalyst for social change (Alim, 2009). Through these narratives, hip-hop in Wijilan continues to evolve as a medium that bridges personal identity and community consciousness.

The Hallmark of Wijilan Hip-hop

Wijilan, a district in Yogyakarta renowned for its profound Javanese cultural traditions, has emerged as an unforeseen center for hip-hop culture. Notwithstanding Yogyakarta's abundant cultural heritage, the local youth have identified with the global art form of hip-hop. The introduction of hip-hop in Wijilan was enabled by globalization, digital accessibility, and an increasing inclination among Indonesian youth to articulate

their frustrations and aspirations through music and art. This chapter examines the localization of hip-hop culture in Wijilan and its interaction with Javanese traditions, societal norms, and local political issues.

Hip-hop emerged in Indonesia in the late 1990s, after the democratization of media following the collapse of Suharto's regime in 1998. During this period, the nation experienced an increase in youth movements and a transformation in cultural receptivity, facilitating the proliferation of foreign music genres, such as hip-hop (Heryanto, 2008). In Yogyakarta, a longstanding hub for the arts, hip-hop began to flourish in the early 2000s. The Wijilan district, recognized for its closeness to the Sultan's palace and traditional arts, progressively evolved into a convergence point for local artists, including hip-hop aficionados. This locale served as an ideal setting for the amalgamation of contemporary global art forms, such as hip-hop, with Javanese cultural elements.

The proliferation of hip-hop in Wijilan is primarily ascribed to local artists and collectives who adopted the genre as both a mode of

entertainment and a vehicle for addressing socio-political concerns. Organizations such as the Jogja Hip-Hop Foundation (JHF) significantly contributed to the proliferation of hip-hop in Yogyakarta. Established in 2003, JHF gained recognition for integrating Javanese poetry with contemporary rap rhythms, exemplifying a blend of local and global influences (Garda, 2011). The fusion of Javanese traditions with hip-hop has produced a distinctive sound and aesthetic that sets Wijilan's hip-hop scene apart from other areas in Indonesia.

In Wijilan, hip-hop functions as a medium for the youth to articulate their concerns regarding poverty, unemployment, corruption, and the difficulties of modernization. Numerous artists incorporate Bahasa Indonesia or Javanese dialects in their lyrics, rendering their music accessible to the local populace while preserving the global essence of hip-hop (Barendregt, 2014). This local adaptation guarantees that the music resonates with the community while enabling artists to preserve a unique cultural identity. The incorporation of local languages and traditional Javanese poetic forms, referred to as *tembang*, has imparted a

distinctive character to
Wijilan's hip-hop scene.

Notwithstanding the
considerable impact of American
hip-hop, Wijilan's artists have
innovatively integrated local
elements into their music.
Traditional Javanese
instruments, such as the
gamelan, have been integrated
with contemporary rhythms,
resulting in a sound that is
both innovative and culturally
rooted (Yampolsky, 2010). This
amalgamation serves not merely
as an artistic decision but
also as a means of cultural
preservation, guaranteeing
that Javanese traditions retain
their significance for the
younger generation. Moreover,
local dances, such as *kuda
lumping*, are occasionally
integrated into hip-hop
performances, thereby
strengthening the connection
between hip-hop and traditional
culture.

Similar to the inception of
hip-hop in the United States,
Wijilan's hip-hop scene mirrors
the social and political issues
of its community. The economic
inequality, corruption, and
challenges related to local
governance are recurring motifs
in the lyrics of Wijilan's
rappers. These artists utilize
their music to confront the
status quo, highlighting local
injustices and motivating youth
to participate in activism.

Thus, hip-hop in Wijilan serves
as both an artistic medium and
an instrument for social
transformation (Weintraub,
2010).

Noval Satria Mahendra
(Personal communication,
February 2, 2024) underscores
the distinctiveness of
Wijilan's hip-hop culture by
stating, "Hip-hop Jogja
bercampur dengan kearifan lokal
menjadi ciri khas [Jogja's hip-
hop mixed with local wisdom
characterizes the city]. This
observation highlights how hip-
hop in Wijilan has developed a
unique character through a
process of blending global
influences with local
traditions. This phenomenon
aligns with the concept of
cultural hybridity as discussed
by Bhabha (2015), where two or
more cultural systems interact
and fuse to form a new, hybrid
cultural identity. In the case
of Wijilan, this hybridity is
not merely an imitation of
global hip-hop trends but a
transformation that integrates
the values, narratives, and
aesthetics of Javanese culture.
This integration is vividly
visible in various forms of
creative expression, including
rap lyrics that explore local
issues, graffiti that
incorporates traditional
Javanese motifs, and
performances that often blend
hip-hop dance styles with

elements of traditional art forms.

For example, "Song of Sabdatama" by Jogja Hip Hop Foundation (JHF) shows the local that is a hybrid with the global:

We are from Jogja / The heart
of Java / Our rhyme is mantra
/ Flows down like lava / We
are from Jogja / The heart
of Java / Our culture is
weapon / Yeah this song of
Sabdatama

"Song of Sabdatama" symbolizes the fusion of local and global cultures, as they bring the essence of Javanese heritage into the world of hip-hop. By identifying themselves as "from Jogja, the heart of Java", JHF emphasizes their connection to a rich cultural legacy. Their reference to "mantra" suggests that their rhymes carry spiritual depth, blending traditional Javanese beliefs with modern musical elements to create a unique cultural expression that flows naturally, like lava from Mount Merapi.

Through the phrase "Our culture is a weapon," JHF conveys a message of cultural resilience and empowerment. By framing their music as a tool for preserving and asserting Javanese identity, they acknowledge the power of cultural heritage to resist

global homogenization. This metaphorical "weapon" helps them stand against external pressures, using music to champion and protect their cultural values within a modern context.

Ultimately, 'Sabdatama' represents JHF's commitment to maintaining authenticity while engaging with global music. By infusing hip-hop with Javanese traditions, they create a hybrid style that not only preserves local culture but also makes it accessible worldwide. This approach allows JHF to position themselves as cultural ambassadors, showcasing Javanese heritage in a way that remains true to its roots while adapting to the modern music landscape.

The tension between adopting American cultural forms and retaining local identity is an ongoing theme in the Wijilan Hip-hop Community, where young artists constantly navigate the intersection of global influence and local tradition. Noval Satria Mahendra's insight underscores this delicate balance, as he observes the melding of Jogja's local wisdom with the global influence of hip-hop. This synthesis is not just a stylistic choice but a conscious political act, one that asserts local identity while embracing a broader, globally recognized form of

artistic resistance. The local wisdom embedded in their work allows the community to reclaim hip-hop as a tool for cultural empowerment rather than cultural domination.

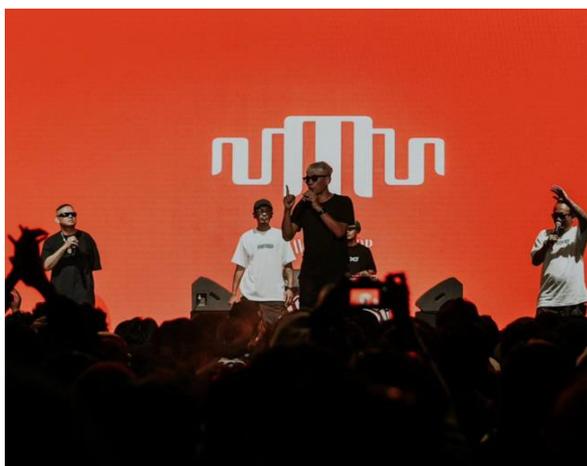


Figure 1. Jogja Hip-hop Foundation (JHF) performances at Soringin Hip-hop Festival

JHF is a music and arts community based in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, that focuses on the development and promotion of hip-hop music with a local cultural twist. The community is known for blending traditional hip-hop elements with Indonesian style and vibes while promoting content that addresses social, cultural, and political issues through powerful and bold lyrics. JHF often features local rappers, producers, and musicians who are inspired by local culture and Indonesia's history and is committed to the growth of the independent music industry in Indonesia. One of JHF's goals is to provide a space for young hip-hop artists to express

themselves and collaborate while using hip-hop as a platform to voice social injustices and important issues. JHF is also known for events and performances that often involve collaborations between rappers, DJs, and producers, supporting works of art that carry strong social messages. They have become one of the pioneers of local-themed hip-hop, now gaining wider recognition in the Indonesian music scene.

On their Instagram account, @hiphopsoringin gives credit and a caption to JHF, as follows

Para pionir rap jawa mengejawantah dalam rupa super group yang kita kenal sebagai Jogja Hip-hop Foundation. Aura sangar itu bukan hanya karena kemegahan sound dan tata panggung. Namun juga keluar dari akumulasi 'ngelmu iku kalakone kanthi laku' Praktik cara dan gaya hidup hiphop berkompromi dengan adab kejawaan yang banyak mengolah rasa. Dialektika inilah yang patut kita amini sebagai keberhasilan penetrasi Rap Jawa pada publik, mendefinisikan 'cool' tanpa menelanjangi bahasa ibu kita {Javanese rap pioneers have materialized into the super group we know as Jogja Hip-Hop Foundation. The fierce aura comes not only from the grandeur of the sound and

stage setup, but also from the accumulation of 'ngelmu iku kalakone kanthi laku [knowledge is gained through action]'. The practice of hip-hop style and lifestyle has found a compromise with Javanese values that deeply engage emotions. This dialectic is what we should recognize as the success of Javanese Rap's penetration into the public, defining 'cool' without stripping away our mother tongue}.

JHF represents a groundbreaking fusion of hip-hop culture and Javanese tradition, proving that modern musical expressions can coexist harmoniously with deep-rooted cultural values. Unlike conventional hip-hop, which often draws from Western influences, JHF has carved out a unique space where Javanese philosophy, language, and artistic sensibilities shape their identity. The phrase "ngelmu iku kalakone kanthi laku [knowledge is gained through action]" reflects their artistic journey—one that is not merely about imitation but about living and embodying the spirit of both hip-hop and Javanese wisdom. This philosophy underscores their authenticity, as they don't just adopt hip-hop as a superficial trend but as a meaningful practice deeply connected to their cultural identity.

One of the most compelling aspects of JHF's music is its ability to blend the intensity of hip-hop's beats and stage presence with the emotional depth of Javanese expression. Hip-hop, traditionally a genre associated with resistance and social commentary, finds a natural counterpart in Javanese poetic traditions such as *macapat* and *tembang*, which have long been used to convey philosophical reflections and social messages. By integrating these elements, JHF transforms their performances into more than just entertainment; they become a powerful platform for storytelling, cultural preservation, and emotional engagement. Their ability to navigate between these two worlds—between the global appeal of hip-hop and the nuanced aesthetics of Javanese art—demonstrates a dialectical success where modern and traditional identities reinforce, rather than diminish, one another.

What makes Javanese rap particularly significant is its ability to redefine what is considered 'cool' without abandoning its linguistic and cultural roots. In a world where globalization often pressures local cultures to conform to dominant trends, JHF has managed to popularize the Javanese language in a way that

feels contemporary and dynamic. They prove that embracing one's heritage does not mean being outdated or irrelevant; rather, it is a way to assert identity in a rapidly changing world. This success in maintaining authenticity while reaching a wide audience shows that cultural expression does not have to be a choice between tradition and modernity—JHF's music exemplifies how both can thrive together, creating a form of hip-hop that is distinctly Javanese yet universally resonant.

The unique nature of Wijilan's hip-hop is further defined by its role in addressing social issues. According to Chang (2005), hip-hop is a cultural movement that reflects and responds to social realities. It serves as a medium to break boundaries and promote change, making it more than just entertainment, but also a tool for social transformation. Muh. Bima Sakti Nur (Personal communication, February 10, 2024) adds that "Lirik-lirik lagu Hip-hop mencerminkan isu-isu sosial [Hip-hop lyrics reflect social issues]. In Wijilan, hip-hop lyrics tackle themes such as inequality, environmental degradation, and youth empowerment. This reflects the transformative power of hip-hop as a voice for the voiceless, a

characteristic observed globally (Chang, 2005; Raditya, 2014).

An example is a song from JHF called "Jogja Ora Didol". The song is a powerful example of the group's unique style, blending traditional Indonesian elements with hip-hop culture. The title itself translates to "Jogja is Not for Sale", with 'Jogja' referring to Yogyakarta, a city that holds deep cultural and historical significance in Indonesia. The song is a declaration of resistance against the commercialization and exploitation of the city's cultural heritage. Through the lyrics, JHF expresses a sense of pride in their hometown, emphasizing that the cultural richness and identity of Yogyakarta should not be reduced to a commodity for profit. It critiques the rapid commercialization of the city, which is often seen in the growing influence of tourism and outside investments that may threaten local traditions and values. "Jogja Ora Didol" not only serves as a protest song but also as a celebration of Yogyakarta's unique culture and its people's resilience. The track combines socially conscious rap with traditional Javanese sounds and references, illustrating how JHF blends modern hip-hop with local

culture to create a powerful, authentic message. This song, like many others by JHF, is both a call to action and an affirmation of cultural pride.

Jogja ora didol! / Ini kotaku, kotamu, kota kita /
Jogja ora didol! / Rumah bersama untuk kita semua /
Jogja ora didol! / Ini kotaku, kotamu, kota kita /
Jogja ora didol! / Jogja istimewa, tetaplah sederhana

The song reflects a form of local cultural resistance against modernization and commercialization that threatens the traditional values of Yogyakarta. In cultural studies, this resistance serves as a critique of policies that could alter the cultural identity and social values of the local community. The main lyric, "Jogja Ora Didol", reinforces the principle that this city is not a commodity to be bought or sold, but a communal home that possesses valuable local cultural heritage worthy of preservation. This aligns with resistance theory, where hip-hop music serves as a tool for challenging global economic dominance (Rose, 1994).

Hip-hop is often a medium for voicing social criticism because of its expressive nature and freedom from mainstream norms. In the lyrics of "Jogja Ora Didol", JHF not

only conveys a message but also strengthens local identity through a distinct linguistic and musical style. They assert "Jogja Ora Didol" as a collective stance of the community against the threat of cultural capitalization. This critique targets the phenomenon of urban spatial changes driven by large-scale investments, such as the construction of malls and luxury hotels, which often come at the expense of public spaces and local cultural identity (Muller, 2011).

The repetition of the phrase "Ini kotaku, kotamu, kota kita" emphasizes the importance of collective ownership and social responsibility toward the city. Through these lyrics, JHF reminds listeners that Yogyakarta is a shared space, with a strong community value, that should not be turned into an investment tool that harms the local population. This principle demonstrates the awareness of local hip-hop culture regarding the importance of solidarity in preserving cultural heritage from external intervention. This collective approach aligns with critical cultural theory, where shared spaces are seen as symbols of collective identity that must be protected (Harvey, 2012).

The message embedded in "Jogja Ora Didol" shows how local elements, such as language and communal values, can serve as tools for social critique within hip-hop. JHF portrays Yogyakarta as "special" due to its simplicity and social openness. By emphasizing that Jogja should remain simple, they critique developments that promote consumerist and individualistic culture, which often contradict local values. This demonstrates resistance to cultural capitalism that overlooks the existing social and cultural conditions of the community (Bennett, 2000).

Therefore, "Jogja Ora Didol" can be seen as a manifestation of cultural resistance through local hip-hop, rejecting cultural homogenization and preserving local uniqueness. In the context of pop culture, hip-hop music often combines traditional elements with modern expressions to voice the aspirations of the people. Through these lyrics, JHF effectively positions itself as a critical voice against socioeconomic changes that threaten local identity and cultural values.

Hip-hop in this context is not just entertainment or artistic expression; it serves as a platform for voicing concerns about local challenges

and aspirations. Lyrics often explore themes of urbanization, social inequality, environmental preservation, and the struggles of everyday life in Yogyakarta. These narratives resonate with the local community, reflecting their lived experiences and fostering a sense of collective identity. For instance, graffiti, which is a prominent element of Wijilan's hip-hop culture, not only beautifies public spaces but also serves as a visual commentary on societal issues. Performances and events organized by the community often aim to raise awareness and spark conversations around these themes, demonstrating how hip-hop can function as a medium of activism and social engagement.

By merging global hip-hop elements with Javanese cultural wisdom, Wijilan's hip-hop creates a powerful narrative that bridges individual expression and community consciousness. The cultural hybridity form not only enhances the cultural richness of the local community but also exemplifies how global cultural trends can be localized in meaningful and innovative ways. Through this process, Wijilan's hip-hop not only preserves the essence of Javanese values but also redefines them within a contemporary global framework,

creating a dynamic and evolving cultural identity that continues to inspire its practitioners and audience alike.

Cultural hybridity in hip-hop is intricately connected to the phenomenon of American hip-hop hegemony, particularly in communities like Yogyakarta, Indonesia. As hip-hop culture has spread globally, it has not only been adopted but also adapted by local communities, leading to the formation of unique norms and values that reflect their cultural contexts.

In Yogyakarta, the influence of American hip-hop is evident in the music, fashion, and language adopted by local artists and fans. However, rather than merely replicating American styles, Yogyakarta's hip-hop community has infused local cultural elements, creating a hybrid form that resonates with their identity. This blending allows for the expression of local issues, traditions, and experiences, thereby establishing a distinct cultural narrative that challenges the dominance of American hip-hop.

The hegemony of American hip-hop often sets the standards for what is considered "authentic" or "mainstream" within the genre.

However, Yogyakarta's hip-hop community has responded by asserting its own values and norms, which may include themes of social justice, local pride, and cultural heritage. This resistance to hegemony illustrates how cultural hybridity enables communities to negotiate their identities and assert their agency in the face of global influences.

Moreover, the local hip-hop scene in Yogyakarta serves as a platform for social commentary, addressing issues such as inequality, corruption, and cultural preservation. By incorporating local dialects, traditional instruments, and indigenous themes, artists create a hybrid identity that not only pays homage to American hip-hop but also critiques and redefines it within their own cultural framework. This dynamic interplay between global and local influences exemplifies how cultural hybridity can shape norms and values, allowing communities to forge their own identities while engaging with broader cultural narratives.

The relationship between cultural hybridity and the hegemony of American hip-hop in Yogyakarta highlights the community's ability to adapt and redefine global influences, creating a unique cultural

expression that reflects their values and experiences.

Soringin Hip-hop Festival

Soringin Hip-hop Festival in Wijilan, Yogyakarta, has emerged as a crucial cultural event within the local hip-hop community. Celebrated annually, the festival serves as both a showcase for local talent and a platform for cultural exchange within the global hip-hop scene. Its name, derived from the Javanese word 'Soringin', which means "shaded" or "sheltered", or "under the Banyan tree", reflects the festival's goal to provide a space for young artists to express their creativity and engage in meaningful dialogue through music, dance, and art. This festival is an essential vehicle for the community to reinforce its cultural identity while simultaneously embracing the global values of hip-hop.

Soringin Hip-hop Festival, held on Saturday, September 14, 2024, at JNM Bloc Yogyakarta, exemplifies the spirit of cultural fusion and creativity. This festival symbolizes how Yogyakarta has embraced global hip-hop culture and seamlessly woven it into its rich local traditions. The result is an electrifying celebration that not only reflects the universal allure of hip-hop but also

showcases its unique Yogyakarta-inspired twist.

Attendees can look forward to a dynamic display of music, dance, and street art, creating an experience where every element resonates with the pulse of both global and local influences. Each performance and piece of art promises to connect with the audience, highlighting how the roots of hip-hop can thrive and evolve within the context of a different cultural backdrop. This fusion underscores how universal art forms can find new life and meaning when adapted to local settings.

With its vibrant blend of artistic expressions, Soringin Hip-hop Festival becomes more than just an event—it is a celebration of creativity and community. The festival invites participants to witness how music, graffiti, and dance come together to tell stories that bridge continents and generations. It stands as a living testament to the power of art to unify diverse traditions, making the connection between global culture and local heritage come alive in a way that is fresh, exciting, and deeply rooted in Yogyakarta's identity.

The Soringin Hip-Hop Festival is a tangible manifestation of the

progressive movement within Yogyakarta's hip-hop community, serving as a platform to channel their ideology, norms, and values through music and hip-hop culture. This festival is not merely a form of entertainment but also a space for expression where hip-hop artists can voice their ideas on identity, society, and culture in a relevant and engaging way. Embracing the spirit of freedom of expression, this festival provides a medium for the hip-hop community to showcase how traditional and modern values can harmoniously blend into their artistic creations.

More than just a music celebration, Soringin Hip-Hop Festival also serves as an educational platform and a space for exchanging ideas among hip-hop enthusiasts. Through lyrics, performances, and various supporting activities, the festival broadens the discourse on how hip-hop can be a tool for conveying social messages, critiquing contemporary issues, and fostering solidarity among communities. Hip-hop in Yogyakarta has evolved beyond just a music genre; it has become a movement that reflects local identity while embracing the global spirit carried by hip-hop culture itself.

With the presence of Soringin Hip-Hop Festival, Yogyakarta's hip-hop community proves that hip-hop is not solely a Western cultural product but can also be adapted and contextualized to align with local values and norms. This festival stands as evidence that hip-hop in Jogja is not only surviving but continuously growing, bringing new flavors to the music and cultural scene. More importantly, the festival solidifies hip-hop as a creative expression that is not only entertaining but also a driving force for social change and the preservation of local cultural values.



Figure 2. The Front Gate of *Soringin Hip-hop Festival*

One of the most striking elements featured in the Soringin Hip-hop Festival is graffiti. Daru Isnawan (personal communication, March 30, 2024), a graffiti artist,

describes graffiti as “*penting dan seni [important and art]*”. This statement reflects the role of graffiti in Wijilan as both a form of artistic expression and a means of reclaiming public spaces. The vibrant graffiti culture in Wijilan transforms mundane urban spaces into platforms for storytelling and cultural dialogue. The role of graffiti in Soringin Hip-hop Festival underscores the dual nature of cultural expression as both personal and communal. Graffiti serves as a visual manifestation of the merging of American hip-hop and Javanese traditions, encapsulating the essence of hybridity that Bhabha describes. In this context, it is not just art but a form of dialogue that bridges different cultural values and narratives. The bold, colorful artworks reflect both the individualistic drive of artists seeking personal expression and the collective identity rooted in Javanese tradition, where public art is seen as a shared heritage.



Figure 3. Graffiti in *Soringin* Hip-hop Festival

This dynamic highlights how values and norms evolve within cultural hybridity. The acceptance and celebration of graffiti in Wijilan demonstrate the fluid adaptation of norms, where what was once considered subversive becomes a legitimate and embraced part of the community. This shift reflects Hansson's idea of the dynamic nature of values and norms, showing that as cultures interact, new interpretations of what is valuable and acceptable can emerge. Through these expressions, Wijilan's hip-hop community not only showcases cultural fusion but also redefines social boundaries, creating a space where diverse influences coexist and enrich one another.

Hip-hop as a culture has several elements that make it up. These elements consist of; DJ, Graffiti, b - boy / b -

girl, MC, Fifth element, and additional elements (Price, 2006). Hip-hop is a multifaceted culture composed of several key elements: DJing, graffiti, b-boying/b-girling, MCing, and the Fifth Element of Knowledge. Each component contributes uniquely to the overall identity of the culture. The DJ plays a foundational role in creating the beats and sounds of hip-hop music, while graffiti serves as a visual form of expression that reflects social and political messages. B-boying and b-girling are energetic dance styles that have become iconic representations of the culture's athleticism and creativity. Meanwhile, MCs deliver powerful lyrics that tell personal and societal stories through rhythm and rhyme.

In addition to these core elements, hip-hop also influences other cultural aspects such as fashion, language, and entrepreneurship. Artists serve as trendsetters, shaping streetwear and introducing new language that permeates mainstream culture. Together, these elements form a dynamic, evolving culture that continues to impact music, art, fashion, and global youth movements, making hip-hop more than just a

genre—it is a powerful cultural force.

The main element in hip hop is the DJ or disc jockey, a person who plays and modifies music to get the desired rhythm or sound. The task of a DJ in hip-hop is to mix the music played so that the audience dances and enjoys the music.



Figure 4. DJ (Disc Jockey) performance at Soringin Hip-hop Festival

The DJ, or disc jockey, has always been the cornerstone of hip-hop culture, serving as its primary architect. In the early days of hip hop during the 1970s, DJs like Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, and Grandmaster Flash were instrumental in developing the genre by experimenting with breakbeats and beat juggling techniques. DJs created the foundation for hip-hop by manipulating vinyl records to extend the instrumental breaks

in songs, which became known as "breaks", allowing break-dancers to showcase their moves. According to Chang (2005), this innovative use of turntables to manipulate and mix music set the stage for the entire hip-hop movement, as it emphasized rhythm and groove over traditional song structures.

The DJ's role in hip-hop goes beyond merely playing records; it involves an intricate understanding of rhythm, timing, and crowd dynamics. Techniques like scratching, beat-matching, and looping were developed to create seamless transitions between songs and to add unique sounds to the music. These techniques were essential in keeping the energy of the crowd high and ensuring that the music flowed smoothly throughout a performance or party. Rose (1994) highlights that the creativity of hip-hop DJs in manipulating sounds transformed the turntable into a musical instrument, turning what was initially a tool for playback into an expressive medium capable of producing new and dynamic audio experiences.

The influence of DJs in hip-hop extends beyond the music itself, shaping the culture's competitive and innovative spirit. DJs were not only responsible for providing the

beats but also for creating an environment that encouraged artistic expression and dance. Their ability to read the crowd and adapt their set to maintain energy and excitement was crucial in establishing the atmosphere of early hip-hop parties. According to Price (2006), the DJ's role in controlling the tempo, mood, and overall vibe of the event was foundational to hip hop's emergence as a social movement, as they set the stage for MCs and break dancers to perform and engage with the audience.



Figure 5. Gamellance dan M2MX, a famous MC in the Wijilan Hip-hop Community

The MC, or Master of Ceremonies, is a vital element of hip-hop culture, primarily responsible for engaging and energizing the audience during live performances. Initially, the role of the MC was to support the DJ by keeping the crowd entertained, delivering shout-outs, and creating a lively atmosphere at parties and events. MC is in charge of keeping the audience connected

to the event, supporting the DJ, by chanting certain meaningful verses and having a unique rhyme. Over time, the MC's role evolved into one of the most influential positions in hip hop, where their ability to connect with the audience through words and rhythm became central to the performance. According to Chang (2005), the transition of the MC from a simple hype-man to a central figure in hip-hop was driven by the need to create a narrative and give voice to the experiences and stories of the community.

One of the primary skills of an MC is their ability to chant verses and create rhymes that resonate with the audience. These verses often reflect social issues, personal experiences, or observations about the world, blending poetry with rhythm to deliver powerful messages. The rhyme patterns and wordplay used by MCs became a distinguishing feature of hip hop, setting it apart from other genres of music. Rose (1994) emphasizes that the creativity and linguistic innovation displayed by MCs not only entertain but also educate and provoke thought, making their rhymes a form of storytelling that reflects the realities of urban life and the culture's struggles.

As hip-hop evolved, the MC's role grew in importance, becoming synonymous with the art of rapping itself. Legendary MCs like Rakim, KRS-One, and Big Daddy Kane redefined the role by introducing complex rhyming techniques, intricate wordplay, and lyrical depth. They transformed the role of the MC into one of a poet and a social commentator, using their platform to address issues like racism, inequality, and empowerment. Price (2006) points out that the MCs of hip-hop are not merely performers but also influential voices who shape cultural narratives and inspire generations through their words and their messages.

The community is often involved in hip-hop events that unite the four elements of hip-hop culture: DJ, graffiti, and MC. They expressed,

Biasanya sih kita satu kesatuan ya ... Kalau biasanya kayak acara yang sekarang ini, kayak hip-hop soringin ini selalu mewadahi 4 elemen hip hop [Usually, we are a unity... Like in events like this, like this hip-hop gathering, it always accommodates the 4 elements of hip-hop]" (Nur Oktavian, September 14, 2024).

It indicates that breakdance in Indonesia often exists in a structured event context with a specific format. Although they

appreciate events like "hip-hop gatherings", there is an awareness that breakdance in Indonesia is more directed toward an industrial form. In conversation, one community member emphasized,

Kalau di Indonesia ini kan sering dijadikan industri. Jadi dia tidak back to the roots, tidak sesuai culture-nya [In Indonesia, it is often turned into an industry. So, it does not go back to the roots, it's not in line with its culture].

It shows that in Indonesia, breakdance is often integrated into formal events, unlike the roots of hip-hop culture in the US, which prioritize spontaneous street expression



Figure 6. Rebzvolution Performance in Soringin Hip-hop Festival

The Rebzvolution, a breakdance community, was founded in 2016 and has now

been active for eight years. Nur Oktavian (Personal communication, September 14, 2024), a.k.a Joker, as the leader of this community, stated, "Rebzvolution itu dari 2016. Ini tahun 2024 berarti kita udah jalan 8 tahun [Rebzvolution has been around since 2016. It is 2024 now, so we have been going for 8 years]". This statement indicates that, although relatively new within the landscape of local cultural development, the community has maintained its presence for a substantial period, demonstrating commitment and sustainability.

By integrating these elements, including graffiti's powerful storytelling aspect, Soringin Hip-hop Festival showcases more than just music and dance. It encapsulates a broader narrative that connects individual artistry with community identity, creating an event that is both an artistic celebration and a cultural statement. This blend ensures that while the festival embraces modern expressions, it remains rooted in the values and stories of Yogyakarta, making it a truly unique and inclusive cultural experience.

CONCLUSION

This Hip-hop culture, originating from the Bronx in

the 1970s, has transcended its roots to become a global cultural phenomenon that intersects with local traditions and values. In Yogyakarta, Indonesia, particularly in the neighborhood of Wijilan, hip-hop has evolved into a medium that harmonizes American individualistic values with the Javanese collective ethos of *gotong royong*. This adaptation has resulted in a form of cultural hybridity, blending elements such as rap, breakdancing, and graffiti with local art forms and languages, creating unique expressions that address local social and environmental issues. Soringin Hip-hop Festival exemplifies this fusion, showcasing how hip-hop can be both a form of entertainment and a cultural movement that fosters social awareness, community identity, and creative economy. The festival's inclusion of graffiti as a storytelling medium underscores the importance of visual art in reclaiming public spaces and fostering cultural dialogue. The ongoing commitment of communities like Rebzvolution highlights the sustainable growth of local hip-hop culture, reflecting how global influences are reshaped to enhance local identity and solidarity.

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